Week ending December 22 1956 *Every Wednesday Fourpence*

JOHN BULL

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A Matter of Room Numbers
by VERNON BARTLETT

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Thursday DEC. 20

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IN THIS ISSUE

Stories

A MATTER OF ROOM NUMBERS *by Vernon Bartlett* 5
THE COURTSHIP OF UNCLE CONAL *by Hugh Michael Hogan* 18

Articles

BOLTING THE DOOR AGAINST CRIME *by Don Everitt* 10
DORA BRYAN'S GAY LIFE OF CRISIS *by Keith Ellis* 12
MONEY ON THE SCRAPHEAP *by Francis Hitching* 16

Serials

THE SMALL WOMAN (Part 3) *by Alan Burgess* 7
SAPPHIRES ON WEDNESDAY (Part 2) *by Malcolm Gair* 14

Features

FREE SPEECH: 4. THE COVER: 4. JOKES: 20. 22, 26, 29. FACES: 20, 26, 28, 31, 33. MY BROTHER ERIC: 21. INNOCENCE: 27. MAKE YOURSELF AT HOME: 31. OPEN TO VIEW: 34.

REPORT FROM THE EDITOR

An East African memory gave Vernon Bartlett a story idea

ON a trip up-country in Malaya last year, Vernon Bartlett heard an amusing piece of gossip in a local club. His fertile imagination immediately seized upon it as a subject for a story; and the vivid memory of an uncomfortable tour of East Africa five years earlier supplied the background to it. *A Matter of Room Numbers,* which begins on page 5, is the result.

Ever since he settled in Singapore two years ago, Bartlett, now aged sixty-two, has indulged in writing fiction—after a lapse of nearly forty years. "But I only do so in a desultory way," he complains. "I have found South-East Asia to be as interesting as I feared it would be." His work as political commentator for newspapers, and a "fondness for the comforts of life," prevent Bartlett from writing more stories.

He moved to Singapore because he felt that the focus of world affairs had shifted from Europe to the Far East. "The Chinese Revolution," he predicts, "will have an even greater effect upon the world than the Russian." And the life there suits him. With his wife Bartlett lives in a bungalow near Singapore's only remaining area of jungle, and he can fill the day with swimming, walking, playing badminton—and enjoying an afternoon siesta.

It's an entirely new way of life after devoting years of work to Europe: Bartlett has been a League of Nations civil servant, a journalist and broadcaster, and for twelve years a Member of Parliament. In addition, he has found time to write about twenty books. From now on he is hoarding material for stories and novels against "the day the improbable happens—when I retire." He toys with the idea of settling in such unlikely places as Abyssinia. But in the end he comes back to the same dream: "to retire to Italy if I can afford to; to Portugal or Spain if I cannot."

WHEN Hugh Michael Hogan lived in Ireland in his youth, his grandfather Harry was the local dandy. He was a huge man, twenty stone and about six feet four tall. "I remember once," says Hogan, "he jumped into the two-wheeled family buggy and couldn't get the pony to move off. It had all four legs in the air."

Grandfather Harry is the model for the hero of Hogan's story *The Courtship Of Uncle Conal,* which begins on page 18. A storyteller as gifted as Uncle Conal, thirty-six year old Hogan is now a successful London business man. He writes short stories because he enjoys it and because "my wife and five avaricious daughters need the money." Saturday is writing day in the Hogan household. While he writes and chops and changes, his daughters sit at his feet waiting for the thrown-out sheets of paper, which they turn over and use as drawing paper.

He lives in an old and solid house at Beckenham, Kent. "It's all frightfully contemporary in the hall," he says, "full of modern baubles and vivid colours. Then you open a fashionable glass door and step into Victoriana. That's the part of the house I haven't got round to modernizing yet."

Free Speech

- **Forget those Christmas calories**
- **Alarm call for the curator**
- **The trippers who had to pay up**

LAST Christmas, my wife and grown-up daughters miserably totted up the extra calories in Christmas fare—and visualized the effect on their figures. They evolved their own Christmas dinner.

This year they are preparing to follow it again, although they aren't really happy about foregoing their full share of everything. The dinner means turkey without stuffing, boiled instead of roast potatoes, no custard on the Christmas pudding, and only one glass of sherry and one glass of dry wine.

As far as I can see, this is only a sop to their consciences. Would a really good blow-out do them any harm, just for once?—S. D. W., Southampton.

"A really good blow-out," says a doctor, "which means eating on Christmas Day about a thousand more calories than are really needed, wouldn't make the slightest difference—provided eating is taken easy afterwards."

Well Trained Owners

Intending dog owners should be required by law to pass a fairly stiff test. This could be framed to

ascertain the extent of a person's common sense, ability to control his or her own temper, knowledge of a dog's requirements and, more important, a willingness to learn.

Perhaps then we might be spared the sight of dogs darting through busy traffic, left to their own devices or clawing hungrily for scraps in dustbins. — MRS. A. B. WOTHERSPOON, Renton, Dunbartonshire.

The Gentle Touch

When I took my seven-year-old son to visit a toy fair in a large store, he left me to explore on his own for a while. Then he returned and said: "Father Christmas is a lady!"

After going to see for myself, I explained that the real Father Christmas must be very busy this year and has had to get other help. Genuine-looking Father Christmases have been rare enough in recent years, but one with a soprano voice leaves no room at all for fantasy.—MRS. O. WOODWARD, Bristol.

"We've had complaints and congratulations," says the store manager. "We employed a woman Father Christmas before the war and found her very suitable. But children seem to be far more observant today."

Unwelcome Reception

A word of warning to all those who might be influenced by the B.B.C. into disposing of their old radios and buying new V.H.F. sets: make sure they will be an improvement in your district.

We have one of the new radios, but we stick to the medium wavelength because reception is better.—ROBERT HILL, Fulham, London, N.W.6.

"Most V.H.F. sets have built-in aerials, which in many cases are not suitable unless the receiver is within fifteen or twenty miles of the transmitter," says the B.B.C. "Since V.H.F. reception is very localized, it can sometimes be improved by turning or moving the aerial slightly. But local radio dealers should be consulted where there is major interference."

Second Sight

The first time I visited the lowlands of Midlothian, in Scotland, I was introduced to a blind young man who took me for a walk to "show me" the country. Suddenly he stopped and said: "Can you see a man and dog over the hill?" When I said I couldn't, he said: "You will." And he was right. The man and his dog must have been half a mile away from us.—MRS. M. INGRAM, Claygate, Surrey.

"Quite likely," says a doctor. "Blind people's hearing—and touch—is far more acute and a dog's barking could easily have been heard half a mile away.

"One sense frequently develops when another is lost. Loss of sense of smell, for example, sharpens the taste. But there is, strangely enough, no evidence that a person's remaining faculties develop after deafness."

Not On Show

While I was visiting the very interesting Museum of English Rural Life at Whiteknights Park, Reading, the usual museum hush was shattered sometimes by a bell ringing. This, I discovered, was because although there are tickets warning people not to touch the exhibits, many do. The warning bell is connected to some of them and let's the curator know they are being touched.

Although the device must be designed for catching children, I—at forty-eight—am still a child as far as this touching of exhibits goes.—HENRY HEATH, Reading, Berks.

"Four of the exhibits—the hammer in the blacksmith scene is one—are wired in this way because they seem to invite being touched," says a museum official. "It's surprising who we catch, too."

Friendly Treatment

I, too, marvel at the intelligence of the so-called "dumb" sheep ("Free Speech," November 24). During the war, sheep often got entangled in the barbed wire around our camp, resulting in some nasty cuts. Our medical orderly treated scores of sheep in a year and they showed no fear of him afterwards. An old ram, whose head had received several stitches, always trotted to meet us when we approached the flock.—K. T. REES, London, E.5.

Bad Blow

The effects of our own ill winds ("Free Speech," November 17) are told us in the saying, "When the wind is in the east, it is good for neither man nor beast." When we were children, my father often spoke of the east wind's bad effect, saying that we were better indoors than out when it blew. We keep pigs, and it is said that they can see wind. Certainly the high winds upset them.

Here in Norfolk we have "lazy" winds—those which would rather go through you than round. And, believe me, they do.—MRS. R. DRURY, Old Costessy, Norwich.

Serials On The Air

I notice that quite often the books which have been serialized in JOHN BULL have been chosen for the Woman's Hour broadcast serial—*A Town Like Alice, They Do It With Mirrors* and *The Proving Flight*, for example. *The Little Walls* has been dramatized for radio, too. — E. R., Pontypridd, Glamorgan.

Another JOHN BULL *serial, "Tiger In The Smoke," has been made into a film by the Rank Organization and has been showing in London. Next February Rank will begin production of "The One That Got Away," which was recently serialized in* JOHN BULL.

Chimney Care

Care should be taken when fitting a clothing cupboard into an old bedroom fireplace ("Make Yourself At Home," JOHN BULL, November 24). In many two-storey houses the bedroom chimney accommodates the flue from the fireplace in the room below and the brickwork of this flue should not be disturbed.

In older property the amateur might also be in trouble if the mortar between the bricks has perished, and hammering dislodges bricks above the six-foot level mentioned.—MALCOLM REEVES, Manchester, 4.

High Life

In a London suburb, ten-storeyed "sky-scraper" flats are being built instead of the usual two-storeyed houses. This seems an excellent idea and I wonder why other large towns don't follow this example. Building upwards would solve many problems including travelling to and from work.—MRS. UDALE, Stoke-on-Trent.

"Many provincial towns do build high flats, but the higher the building the more it costs, because of the provision of lifts, heavier foundations and separate means of access in case of fire," says the Housing Ministry. "The modern trend is towards a pleasing mixture of architecture—high and low flats and maisonettes and houses—so as to satisfy different tastes."

Down The Hatch

On a day trip from Eastbourne to Boulogne, two of us saw a notice (in English) in a wine shop saying that the government would allow each person to take back half a bottle of

brandy free of duty. We each boldly produced our half-bottle at Eastbourne, but found we had 12s. 11d. to pay.—A. S. G., Edinburgh.

"Concessions do not apply to people making day trips to places outside the U.K., and in any case they are not a legal entitlement," says a Customs official. "They are half a pound of tobacco—about two hundred cigarettes—half a bottle of spirits, a bottle of wine, and half a pint of perfume and toilet waters, of which not more than half may be perfume. When the amount of any item exceeds twice the specified limit, duty is charged on the full amount. Otherwise, it is charged on the excess only."

John Bull pays one guinea for each letter published in "Free Speech," and at the usual rates for photographs. Readers with problems (other than medical) should write to the John Bull Free Advice Service, whose experts answer questions by post

JOHN BULL FOR CHRISTMAS

Next week's issue of JOHN BULL will be on sale on Monday, December 24

THE COVER

WHAT astonishing will-power! Surrounded by the perishable, fragile and very, very urgent ingredients for a hundred Christmas feasts, here's a man who can lunch off cheese sandwiches and sip lukewarm tea without a trace of envy. Let's *hope* that's so, anyway, or he's likely to go home expecting a banquet. For a wife, this is almost as bad as having a chef for a husband; she can't compete with such a mouth-watering job. But now, sir, back to work. And when Laurent's Christmas dinner has safely arrived at Eastbourne, he will be delighted to wish you a merry, indigestible Christmas.

SEE PAGE 28 FOR RESULT OF COVER CONTEST No. 9

A MATTER OF ROOM NUMBERS

by ***VERNON BARTLETT***

ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN HESELTINE

Jeremy made sure they would be a long way apart. It was Harriet who moved closer . . .

I DIDN'T know Harriet Jacobs and Jeremy Sykes during their extremist phase, when he lived in Room 1 and she lived in Room 25, at opposite ends of the long, bungalow-type Tanganyika Highlands Hotel. When I returned there after the war, he occupied Room 8 and she occupied Room 18. Even so, I had to read the newspaper report of their wedding a couple of times before I could take it in. For, even at that stage of their career, you couldn't spend an hour in the hotel without being told by somebody—probably by him or her—how much they hated each other.

So I made some inquiries. And this, as far as I know, is an accurate version of their story.

Jeremy had made quite a success out of managing the hotel before the war, despite the obvious absurdity of building so large a place in so remote a part of the country. People came up from the steaming plains for some invigorating air, and there was very little Jeremy didn't know about the birds, beasts and even the flowers of the region. My particular hobby at the time was bird-watching, and he taught me more about it than anybody else I've met. In the hotel, he was impatient and quick-tempered; but he was wonderfully patient when we were out in some hide, waiting for a bird to come back to her nest. The hotel's income couldn't have been great, but the running costs couldn't have been very high, for Jeremy grew most of the food on the farm and he had a grand way of jollying work out of the African boys.

That was before the war. In that unpleasant

For once Jeremy had found a woman he didn't hate on sight. And Lorna, the film star, seemed to like him

"You're the meanest, most selfish old pig I've ever met and I hate you," Harriet said.... Jeremy knew that he deserved it

episode, Jeremy lost a leg. He lost it, to make matters worse, in a very unromantic and futile way, which seemed to worry him quite a lot. He had gone home to see what he could do to help, and had been knocked out by a bomb splinter in Holborn during one of the first raids of the war.

When he returned to Tanganyika, with a tin leg, to open up the hotel again, things had changed.

The Africans were no longer so pleased with his paternal kind of dictatorship. Two kindred spirits on the board of directors in Johannesburg had left and had been replaced by two chartered accountants who criticized his slap-dash way of keeping accounts. And the development of flying and a new interest in Africa had changed the clientele. Almost as many women as men now came to the hotel—or so it seemed to Jeremy—and he just couldn't bear women.

It was in these circumstances that he let it be known in Johannesburg that he could do with some help. He did so in his characteristic manner. McFarlane, one of his directors and also one of his friends, gave me a wry smile as he tossed the letter across his desk. "In one way at least the war hasn't changed him," he said.

I DON'T remember the letter word for word, but one or two sentences stuck in my mind. "If you want me to squeeze twenty per cent out of this place *and* be tidy about it," Jeremy wrote, "you might as well send me someone to help cook the figures; my job is to keep a few visitors comfortable, not to make a few rich men richer." And it also struck me as unusual to refer to one's directors as "a lot of pot-bellied old men whose nearest approach to manual work is to sign their names on the backs of cheques."

"We sent him his assistant," McFarlane told me, "and by way of thanks he sent us a rude reply. Of course, he ought to be sacked. But he does his job so well and—well, I for one can't help liking him. Besides," he added, pulling down the corner of his mouth in a sardonic grin, "he had some excuse. You see, we sent him a woman assistant. You ought to call in to see how they are getting on."

I decided that I would. I hadn't seen Jeremy Sykes since before the war, and I admit that I was curious to see how such an inveterate misogynist was dealing with the situation.

I asked McFarlane for more details about this woman. Harriet Jacobs, he said her name was, and she sounded frightfully competent. She had managed one of the company's smaller hotels on the coast south of Durban. When that was destroyed by fire; she worked as second-in-command of the accountant's branch in Johannesburg, but she wanted a more varied kind of job, and she was not deterred by all that she had heard about Jeremy Sykes.

She had now been up there for a year; she hadn't tamed Jeremy, but the directors were very satisfied with the hotel's takings.

Their first meeting must have been difficult. Apparently Jeremy hadn't even had the courtesy to go down to the air-strip to meet her, but had waited in the hotel office.

"I don't know why they sent you up here," were almost his first words to her. "They know I hate women about the place. Still, that's not your fault," he added grudgingly. Then, quite unnecessarily, he told her that he had moved from the centre of the building to Room One, in the west wing, and that her room was Number 25, at the end of the east wing. Nor would they meet at meals, since one of them ought to be in the office on duty even during the rainy season (when there were few guests). He gave her a chair and a table in the corner of the office, and two boxes full of bills, some paid and most unpaid.

Harriet seems to have taken all this with calm. The first row came two days later when Jeremy fell over a bucket in the corridor. Of course, it shouldn't have been there—had Harriet been a woman of a different kind, one might almost have suspected that it had been placed at that particular corner on purpose—but nothing could excuse Jeremy's rage.

"But the place is so filthy," Harriet expostulated.

That did it. To some deep-rooted and unexplained prejudice against women in general was now added this specific woman's injury to his pride. From then onwards there was war.

Harriet had constantly to remind herself that there were compensations in the job. The pay was good; there was nothing here on which to waste it; as long as she kept out of *his* way, she was far more her own master than she had been in Johannesburg; she had far more leisure than she had in Durban; she felt well and enjoyed the wide, rolling country with its thorn scrub that reminded her of Salisbury Plain; she had plans for the garden....

That garden provided the occasion for one of their more typical rows. Without saying anything to Jeremy, Harriet had already moved into Room 22; it shortened her walk to the office by a few yards and the view from the window was less obscured by the bougainvillea. If bougainvillea flourished on these uplands, why shouldn't frangipani? She wrote to a friend in Pretoria, who sent her a large bundle of young plants, and Jeremy, on his return from a business trip to Dar-es-Salaam, found them standing proudly on either side of the drive.

HE stormed into the office. What the hell were they doing there? he asked. Harriet replied mildly that she loved the scent from the rich, white flowers.

So did Jeremy himself, but he wasn't going to say so. "But by what right," he demanded, "do you presume to arrange my garden?"

"The company's garden," she reminded him. "I think they look nice, and we do need to improve the look of the drive."

"We," if you please! For a moment Jeremy struggled with the temptation to go out and pull the damned things up. But he had to admit—although not, of course, to her—that the plants were an improvement. Finding nothing effective to say, he stumped angrily along the corridor to his room.

The next important row happened on the day when the plumbing went wrong in Harriet's wing of the hotel. This was something about which she understood nothing, and she had to appeal to Jeremy for help.

She showed him into Room 22. Against his will, he noticed that it was a very agreeable room. A few photographs made it home-like; above all, there were great bunches of flowers most attractively arranged. It was certainly the pleasantest room in the house and she had appropriated it for herself.

"I thought I told you your room was Number 25," he said with icy politeness.

"Yes, but I changed to this one."

"And on whose instructions? Who told you to occupy the best room in the hotel? This place is run for the benefit of the guests, not for you or me."

"Nobody instructed me. But I have to serve the company as best I can——"

"Damn the company!"

"And I saw no reason for being so far from the office. I go to and fro ten times as much as any visitor. It seemed to be a sensible thing to do. Besides," she added defiantly, "I prefer the view from this room."

"But you've taken the best room in the house."

For the first time Harriet looked at Jeremy with pity rather than indignation. She said: "It's exactly the same size and shape as every other room along this corridor."

What she had said was true. The room *was* the same as all the other rooms, although it was so entirely different. Jeremy went back angry and discontented to Room 1. He noticed how untidy it was, and cursed his boy, Pepsicola, for a defect which he knew was of his own making.

The next day, during one of their inevitable meetings in the office, Harriet turned to him with a smile that was half friendly and half mocking. "You objected to my taking Room 22," she said, "and perhaps it is nicer than the others. So

Continued on page 27

THE SMALL WOMAN (3) by ALAN BURGESS

Into a rioting mob—alone

Gladys was here to stop them killing each other. But she stood terrified in the midst of a wild and fiendish battle. Suddenly a man with an axe rushed towards her

THE murderers, thieves and bandits in the prison of Yangcheng, a remote little town in the mountains of Shansi, in North China, had started a fierce riot. At the entrance, the prison governor faced the tiny figure of Gladys Aylward, the former housemaid from London who had made her way unaided to this far part of China in her determination to be a missionary and to preach the Christian Gospel.

"Go in and stop the fighting," he said. "You tell everybody your God protects you from harm. Stop this riot!"

Gladys was terrified. But she knew that if she failed now she was finished in Yangcheng for ever.

"Open the door," she said, "I'll go in to them."

"The key!" snapped the governor. "The key, quickly!"

One of his orderlies came forward with a huge iron key. The immense iron-barred door swung open. They literally pushed her inside. It was dark. The door closed behind her. She heard the great key turn. She was locked in

She took two angry steps forward. "Give me that chopper!" she demanded furiously. "Give it to me at once . . . !" There was blood on the blade

ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN BERRY

Gladys Aylward tells a Bible story to prisoners in a Chinese jail. She won many privileges for them

Three of the children adopted by Gladys—Ninepence (right), Less (rear), Bao Bao (front) —and a playmate in Yangcheng

the prison with a horde of raving criminals who by their din sounded as if they had all gone completely insane. A dark tunnel, twenty yards long, stretched before her. At the far end it appeared to open out into a courtyard. She could see figures racing across the entrance. With faltering footsteps, she walked through it.

The courtyard was about sixty feet square, with queer cage-like structures round all four sides. Within its confines a writhing, fiendish battle was going on. Several bodies were stretched out on the flagstones. One man, obviously dead, lay only a few feet away from her, blood still pouring from a great wound in his head. There was blood everywhere. Inside the cage-like structures small private battles were being fought.

THE main group of men, however, were watching one convict who brandished a large, blood-stained chopper. As Gladys stared, he suddenly rushed at them and they scattered wildly to every part of the square. No one took any notice whatsoever of Gladys. For fully half a minute she stood motionless. The man rushed again; the group parted; he singled one man out and chased him. He ran towards Gladys, then ducked away. The madman with the axe halted only a few feet from her. She took two angry steps towards him.

"Give me that chopper!" she said furiously. "Give it to me at once!"

The man took two paces forward. Suddenly, meekly, he held out the axe. Gladys snatched the weapon from his hand and held it rigidly down by her side. She was conscious that there was blood on the blade and that it would stain her clothes. The other convicts—there must have been fifty or sixty men cowering there—stared from every corner of the courtyard.

"All of you!" she shouted. "Come over here! Come on, form a line!"

Obediently the convicts shambled across, forming into a ragged group before her. She regarded them stormily but in silence for a few moments. Then suddenly her fear had gone. In its place was an immense pity. They were so wretched. They were so hopeless. A mass of thin faces: angular cheek-bones, puckered lips; faces contorted with misery, pain and hunger; eyes dark with fear and despair, looked into hers. They were remnants of humanity, half-men, many of them dressed in rags, caked in dust, running with lice; animals more than men, and the cages in which they were penned around the arena were those of brutes.

"You should be ashamed of yourselves," she said, berating them. "All this noise and all this mess! The governor sent me in here to find out what it was all about. Now, if you clean up this courtyard and promise to behave in future, I'll ask him to deal leniently with you this time." She tried to keep her eyes away from the still figures of the dead. She knew she must keep their attention. "Now what is your grievance? Why did you start fighting like this?"

There was no answer. Several hung their heads in shame.

"I want you to appoint a spokesman, then," she went on, "and he can tell me what the trouble is. And then you can start cleaning up this courtyard at once. Now go over in that corner and appoint your spokesman."

The convicts trooped over into the corner she indicated and talked among themselves. A few moments later, one of the taller men of slightly better physique approached.

"My name is Feng," he said. "I am their spokesman." Later Gladys learned that he had once been a Buddhist priest; he had been convicted of theft from the other priests of the temple and sentenced to eight years in jail.

He explained that no one really knew why, or how, the riot had started. They were allowed the chopper—he indicated the axe which Gladys still carried—for an hour every day to cut up their food. Someone had quarrelled over its possession, someone else had joined in and, suddenly, without anyone knowing exactly why, the volcano of passion had erupted and a lava of blood flowed everywhere.

Perhaps it was that many of the men had been there for many years, he said. As she knew, unless their friends or relatives sent in food, they starved. It was hard to sit up against a wall and starve to death while other men ate. Sometimes one of their number was taken into the square and executed. That terror hung over many heads. Feng could not explain the outbreak: but the walls were high and the doors were strong; they never saw the outside world, women or the mountains, a tree in blossom or a friendly face; sometimes the spirit grew so oppressed that it burst out of a man in a wild tumult of violence. That, he thought, was what had occurred. They were all very sorry.

"What do you do all day in here?" asked Gladys seriously.

"Do? There is nothing to do."

"But a man must have work, something to do. I shall see the governor about it."

It was at that moment she became conscious that the governor and his retinue were behind her. The noise of the riot had died and they had now thought it safe to enter.

The governor bowed to Gladys. "You have done well," he said. "We must thank you."

"It's disgraceful," she said bitterly. "These men are locked up here week after week, year after year with nothing to do. Of course you have riots if they've nothing to occupy their time. You must find them occupations."

The governor was completely puzzled. "Occupations?" he repeated.

"They must have work to do. We must get looms so that they can weave cloth; we must find them all sorts of jobs so that they can earn a little money and buy food, and get back a little self-respect."

The governor nodded. "We will discuss it later," he said amiably.

"I have promised them there will be no reprisals," she said.

AGAIN the governor nodded. A few corpses were rarely the subject of an official inquiry. "As long as there is no recurrence," he said, "we shall forget all about it."

"I'm glad," said Gladys. She turned to Feng. "I'm going now, but I shall be back. I will do all I can to help you."

She saw upon her the dark eyes of the priest who was a thief. "Thank you," he said. "Thank you, Ai-weh-deh."

She did not know at the time what "Ai-weh-deh" meant. That evening she asked her assistant, Lu-Yung Cheng.

"Ai-weh-deh?" he said curiously. "It means the virtuous one."

She was known as Ai-weh-deh for all her remaining years in China.

The exploit in the prison raised Gladys's prestige enormously in Yangcheng. Becoming

Bao Bao ("precious bundle") joined the family after Ninepence and Less found him by a river. Nobody ever knew where he came from or who were his parents

Gladys used to visit David and Jean Davis, who ran Tsehchow mission with the aid of Chinese elders. Davis was once captured by mountain bandits

official foot-inspector—a job given her by the local mandarin—had given her some importance, but stopping a jail riot had conferred honour of a different sort altogether. Merchants in their shop doorways who had ignored her for so long now bowed politely as she passed.

She did not forget her promise to the prisoners. The governor, at heart, was an educated, kindly man, and in the years that followed became a good friend of hers. If the condition of his prison was abysmal, it was because all prisons were like that in China. If only to prevent more riots breaking out, he was perfectly willing to take hints from Gladys.

No large-scale reforms could be accomplished; there was no money in the city's funds allotted to the improvements of prisons. Gladys had little money, either, but she did manage to get a couple of old looms from friends of the governor, and a supply of yarn. She obtained cotton cloth, and set the prisoners to making the puttees which were worn in Shansi, and installed a miller's wheel so that they could grind grain and make a few *cash* out of that work.

She visited them regularly—almost every day when she was in Yangcheng—taught them some facts about hygiene, and read them stories. She managed to get some tame rabbits and they kept them in hutches and bred them. But perhaps her greatest triumph was when the governor's old school friend, a scholar of some repute, visited Yangcheng.

"He is a Christian," said the governor, importantly. "Perhaps I could prevail upon him to preach in your mission."

"A good idea," said Gladys at once. "And I'll tell you what. Why don't we have all your convicts down to listen to him?"

"You mean allow them out of jail?" The governor was perturbed. "That is impossible!"

"Why is it impossible? Some of them have never left that courtyard for ten years or more. It would be a great treat for them."

"But they're convicts . . . !"

"You could guard them. It would flatter your old friend, too; if he's a good Christian, that is."

Reluctantly, after a little more pressure, the governor agreed to let them out for one afternoon.

Gladys never forgot the Sunday the convicts came to church. Manacled together with heavy chains, they were marched down the main streets and out of the West Gate. The populace lined the roads to stare at them. Once outside the gate, the whole troop halted instinctively and stared at the mountains; for two whole minutes the soldiers who were guarding them allowed them to enjoy the far-stretching panorama. Then they marched down the narrow street, filed through the inn courtyard, and into the old ancestral hall at the end, which had now been converted into a mission hall.

HERE the convicts sat on the floor while the portly, beaming friend of the governor preached to them solidly for three long hours. It was perhaps the most blissful church service ever conducted in Shansi. At the end of it, through their spokesman, they thanked Gladys gravely for allowing them this privilege, and with chains jangling marched back to jail. . . .

It was in her second year at Yangcheng that Gladys had her first small altercation with the mandarin. She had just returned from a foot-inspection tour into the mountains, and was walking down the main street rehearsing the speech she was going to make to him. As her employer, he should know about some things and put a stop to them.

"Mandarin," she was going to say, "I wish to discuss with you the status of women." She would pause there to let that point sink in. "Is it right," she would continue, "that a man is allowed to beat his wife? Is it right that a husband has the power to sell his wife, even to kill his wife? As one most loyal and obedient employee, these things have been brought forcibly to my notice in my journeys into the mountain villages. Respectfully, I would like to know what you intend to do about these matters? I know they are of immemorial origin, but that does not make them any less repellent."

She halted in mid-thought when she saw a woman sitting on the pavement with her feet in the roadway. The woman was swarthy, coarse, dirty. Heavy silver ear-rings dangled from her ear lobes. Silver and jade pins were stuck in her hair; she wore a silver necklace and embossed bracelets; and her baggy trousers were secured at the ankle by bright green puttees. These

Continued on page 29

In 1936 Gladys Aylward became a naturalized Chinese—and she received this certificate to prove it

Bolting the door against crime

by DON EVERITT

Over a thieves' paradise of wealthy banks, fur stores and offices, Harold Niven's team keeps watch. It foils armed gangs and burglars—before their raids take place

Police on the beat help to stop crime

DETECTIVE-INSPECTOR Harold Niven received the information from a lift attendant working in an office block near the Bank of England. "At exactly the same time every Tuesday morning," the lift man said, "a large black limousine stops at one spot about thirty yards from the Bank of England entrance. Three men get out and take suitcases into the Bank. They return a few minutes later, put the cases in the car-boot and drive away. It's just like clockwork."

With his sergeant, Niven kept watch on succeeding Tuesdays. The three men used the same car each time and travelled by the same route. The facts seemed clear-cut. The detectives stopped the men, showed their warrant cards and asked them their business. They said that they collected a payroll for the office of an overseas government. Most weeks the cases contained about £10,000. Sometimes, the three men collected very much more.

Niven at once called on the government's London cashier and told him that the routine followed by his messengers presented a perfect target for armed robbers. On the detective's advice, the messengers have since varied the day and time of the collection, their route and car.

"It's remarkable how many firms get into a systematic rut in collecting their payrolls," says Niven, a forty-six year old Scot. "They allow hold-up gangs to prepare their attacks down to the finest detail."

As crime prevention officer at D Division, City of London Police, Niven, a man of military bearing and persuasive manner, has to detect and stop crimes before they happen. "I try to seal up the openings for the criminal before he arrives."

Late one evening a jangling burglar alarm brought a policeman hurriedly to a dark cul-de-sac. His torch picked out ten alarms within a few yards, and he could not quickly tell which one rang. As it happened, the call was false, but Niven took note of the constable's difficulty. Within a few days, he persuaded the owners of the ten alarms to fit each with an indicator which would flash when the bell rang.

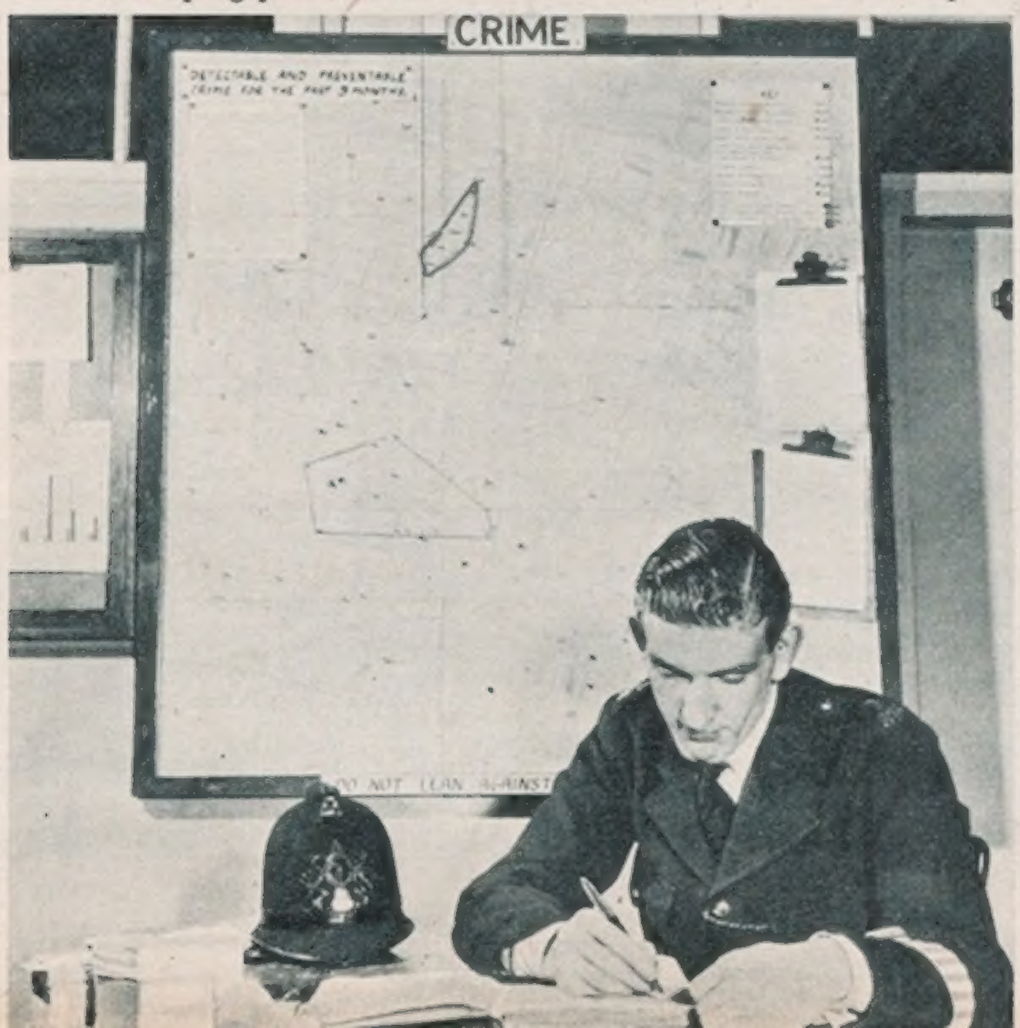
The City of London Police formed its Prevention of Crime Squad, of which Niven is a member, four and a half years ago. For some time before, many of its senior officers, notably Assistant Commissioner Hugh Penry Griffiths and Detective Chief Inspector William Powner, had felt that by close police observation and by educating the public in simple standards of care they could almost halve the crime figures.

The responsibility of the city police extends over a square mile, or, more precisely, 677 acres, of tightly packed banks, warehouses and offices which form the greatest police and insurance risk of its kind in the world. A million people work in the city daily. It contains the world's largest fur market, and the headquarters of leading banks and insurance, shipping, oil, wool, coal, corn, tea and many other concerns.

The statistics showed that fifty per cent of

JOHN BULL PHOTOGRAPHS BY LAWRENCE HANLEY

Patrol men report in a suggestions book on firms that are not keeping premises secure. Then owners are asked to help



Detective Inspector Niven (left) suggests ways to safeguard a furrier's stock. Hundreds of firms have taken the squad's advice

by checking doors, and making sure that valuable displays are well protected

the city's crimes occurred inside premises, and twenty per cent involved breaking and entering. The Home Office classifies crimes within premises as non-preventable because they do not occur within the scope of normal police supervision. Griffiths, Powner and his colleagues thought differently. In April, 1952, Griffiths formed the Prevention of Crime Squad, the first in Britain.

Griffiths, now in charge of the squad, says: "Crime prevention is not new, just badly neglected. In 1829, the first Metropolitan Police commissioners gave the primary object of an efficient police force as the prevention of crime, with detection and punishment of offenders coming in second place. Failure to prevent crime undermines public confidence in the police."

The statistics covering the crimes which the squad set out to prevent show its success. In 1951, thefts from premises, breaking and entering, thefts of and from vehicles, and suicides and serious assaults in public places totalled 2,506. By 1955, they had fallen by twenty-five per cent to 1,864. The records show that hundreds of firms have taken new security measures as a result of the squad's advice.

Crime prevention begins on the beat. The squad's field officers, Harold Niven at D Division, Herbert Treves at B and John Oakley at C, rely for their raw material on observations made by men on routine patrols.

"They report their findings in a suggestions book in the muster room at each station," says Niven. Typical entries include "rear of premises vulnerable," "ladders and scaffolding give access to rear of bank," "valuable window display left unprotected at night," "lock insecure."

One constable reported recently to Niven that the rope from a crane on a building site dangled alongside an office block and would give an agile thief an easy means of access to the upper storey windows. Niven got the crane contractors to leave less rope extended at night.

Another officer found immediately inside the street door of an estate agent's office a board containing two hundred keys, each with an addressed label, showing all the London premises on the firm's books. "It was a gift for a walk-in thief," says Niven. The crime prevention officer persuaded the agent to move the keyboard to an upper office.

Most people readily comply with the squad's requests. With the few who do not, Niven and his colleagues employ persistence and salesmanship.

One business man refused to replace a door lock on the ground of expense: a locksmith had estimated the cost at £8. Niven changed the man's mind by telling him of another locksmith who would do a good job for less than £2.

Firms ignore the squad often to their cost. "On Bert Treves's division last year, the men on the beat made a hundred and seven reports in the suggestions book," says Niven. "Treves, his sergeant and his constable had all but four of the suggestions put into effect.

"Those four paid the penalty. A firm which persistently allowed its cleaners to leave the front door unlocked in the early morning lost cash and stamps. In a Smithfield office block where firms neglected to close a fire escape gate at night, safe blowers cracked four safes. A Fleet Street photographer who always left his front door open lost a camera worth £120 to a walk-in thief. And while Treves tried to persuade property owners to heighten a wall in a courtyard, thieves climbed it eight times and broke into premises beyond."

In John Oakley's C Division a safe robber last year made a handsome living by working in multi-office blocks. He entered a building either in the early morning immediately after the cleaners or in the early evening when a few occupants remained.

He then broke into a darkened suite of offices with a skeleton key and searched for the key to the safe. So many firms leave their safe keys in desk drawers that in a period of nine months this thief opened ninety safes and carried off amounts up to £250.

To fight such specific outbreaks and seasonal crimes, the squad distributes an immense amount of verbal and printed propaganda. "We have to keep on and on at people all the time."

Every month, the divisions hold an "At Home" to which they invite representatives of firms to hear lectures and to make friends with the policemen over a cup of tea. At Christmas, warning circulars go out to firms displaying valuable goods.

In 1955, the squad distributed through the men on the beat five thousand Christmas cards to motorists, warning them not to leave presents in unlocked cars. At Niven's request, a national grocery firm put in the wage packets of all its drivers instructions not to leave van doors open.

Before the crime prevention squad came into being, each policeman and detective kept very much to his own cases. Today, every case gets as much publicity within the force as possible. It has also become part of the officer's job to recommend to the victims of crimes what steps they should take to prevent recurrences. At this stage, Niven or the other members of the crime prevention squad are often asked to help.

Niven had a tough assignment after a £7,000 safe robbery. The thieves had broken into the office in question with a skeleton key. "All thirty-six firms in the building had four-lever mortise locks. A thief may need only nine skeleton keys to open any four-lever lock. Somehow, we had to persuade the firms unaffected by the robbery that they ought to change their locks. Few of them would listen.

"In the end, we persuaded them to lock all their outer doors while we carried out a little breaking and entering ourselves. With half a dozen skeleton keys, we broke into every office. The occupants were most impressed. All but two of them did as we asked and fitted five-lever mortise locks or additional padlocks."

In its infancy the squad drew its staff from the C.I.D., but lately uniformed men, being basically more concerned with crime prevention, have filled the jobs. The teams of three, inspector, sergeant and constable, in each of the three divisions are changed every eighteen months to spread the idea of crime prevention gradually through the force. Harold Niven is something of an exception: a C.I.D. man, he has had two spells with the squad.

"I find it incredible," he says, "that so many people need so much telling about taking care of their own property."

But even officers of the Prevention of Crime Squad are not immune from this failing. Some time ago, one of them went to advise the manager of a firm about a rash of overcoat thefts.

The officer hung his coat up just inside the front door of the suite of offices. When he came to leave, his coat had gone. THE END

Many firms collect wages from the bank in a routine way. "They allow gangs to prepare attacks in detail," says Niven

When Dora took over the switchboard at the hotel she owns all the buzzers went at once. She fled in panic

Dora Bryan's gay life of crisis

by KEITH ELLIS

On stage and off she's a dizzy comic who is always in trouble. As a gossiping housewife or good-time girl she makes her audience laugh—and doesn't know why

FIFTEEN months ago, a pert blonde wearing a tight grey skirt, a pinky red jumper and a hat decorated with cherries walked on to the stage of London's Winter Garden Theatre in A. P. Herbert's *The Water Gipsies*. After exchanging two lines of dialogue with her "father," she launched into a song called "Why do they call me Lily?"

For impresario Peter Saunders, it was an anxious moment. He had gambled the success of his show on the blonde, who had never before had a starring part in a West End musical. Her name was Dora Bryan, and when he cast her he had hoped that she would share the honours with another actress who had a longer part.

Dora's song literally stopped the performance. After that she completely dominated the audience. Next morning, Saunders had her name put in lights outside the theatre and when she left the cast seven months later, he had to take off the production. "The only person who could have replaced her was Diana Dors," says Saunders, "and she was just off to Hollywood. There's no doubt Dora stole the show."

An ingenuous Lancastrian of thirty-two, Dora Bryan has been stealing shows ever since she left Oldham repertory company at the age of twenty. Several film critics have remarked that her tiny character parts as barmaids, good-time girls and gossiping housewives are remembered long after the films themselves have been forgotten. Ian Carmichael, the film actor, says: "If you're on the stage with Dora, the audience is apt to look at her most of the time."

Altogether she has appeared in more than forty films. They include *Odd Man Out, The Fallen Idol, No Room At The Inn, The Cure For Love, The Blue Lamp, Cockleshell Heroes, See How They Run, Child In The House* and *The Green Man*. She has acted in West End plays, made her name as a comedienne in the Globe and Lyric revues, and played Miss Plum in the radio series *Much Binding In Fleet Street*.

Carmichael, who appeared with her in several shows, says: "Dora is a natural. She can get a lot of laughs and not know why. She's at her funniest when she's unconscious of being funny."

Friends confirm that she is as funny offstage as on. Gossiping away, often over knitting or the latest addition to her patchwork quilt, she keeps wriggling in her chair and hitching up her hobble skirt. Her blue doll's eyes open wide. Coy smiles and scowls of puzzlement cross her round freckled face. Her mother, Mrs. Gina Broadbent, says: "She comes out with the funniest remarks when she's not thinking."

Recently, she was watching her husband, Lancashire League professional Bill Lawton, batting in a cricket match. After a short innings, he came back to the pavilion grumbling at the umpire's decision of "stumped." Dora scowled at his lack of sportsmanship. "What are you grousing about?" she demanded. "I saw those things fall off myself."

A critic, writing about her performance in a revue, once remarked: "She has made a corner in a peculiar kind of dumb-belle, almost pugnacious in her stupidity."

In private life, she exudes the same kind of feminine helplessness that she depicts on the stage. She forgets her handbag, mislays her car keys or lets the fire out. Recently, during a staff shortage, she took over the reception desk at the private hotel she has bought in South Kensington. "I got on all right for a time," she says. "Then all the buzzers sounded on the telephone switchboard. I didn't know *what* to do. I just *had* to go out and shout for Bill."

When she describes her experiences, they become even more dramatic. "Nothing ordinary ever happens to Dora," says actor Maurice Denham. "Everything is a crisis, an epic."

When she was playing the scriptwriter in *Simon And Laura*, there was a scene in which she had to pour a gin and tonic. "It was a very sedate scene," says Dora, "but when I came to take the top off the tonic bottle I couldn't find the opener. Well, I had to put something in the gin and luckily there was a soda syphon on the drinks tray. Not realizing it was new, I pressed too hard and the soda water squirted all over my satin dress. I had to finish the scene with it absolutely *soaking*."

The way she tells the story, she makes it sound as though she had suffered a fate worse than Lady Godiva's. "Dora," says Peter Saunders, "goes through life with a perpetual 'Oh! I say' look on her face."

While chuckling at her "Dora-isms," other actors deeply respect her energy, her professional skill and her business sense. "She knows what she wants," says Carmichael, "and she'll fight for it. She has a north country knack of saying what she thinks. If an agent proposes a fee she thinks too small she'll say: 'Don't be silly.'"

However busy, Dora never refuses work. But she still finds time to play golf with her husband

HOWEVER busy she is, Dora never refuses work. When she is playing nightly at the theatre, making films during the day and recording a radio series on Sunday, she will somehow find time for an odd broadcast or charity appearance. "The worst time," says her husband, "is when film work coincides with rehearsals for a new show. Once, she was arriving home at 3.30 a.m. from rehearsals and getting up at 5 a.m to start a full day's filming."

Even during breaks in rehearsal, she never relaxes. While the rest of the cast put their feet up or slip out for a coffee, she takes her poodle, Sambo, for a walk or goes shopping. Once, during the interval of an unusually tense opening night, friends found her making curtains on the dressing-room floor.

On at least one occasion, her refusal to remain

Peter Saunders gambled in giving Dora a starring part in *The Water Gipsies*. When she had to leave the cast the show closed down. "Only Diana Dors could have replaced her," said Saunders

In *Child In The House*, Dora filmed with Mandy Miller. Critics remark that her character parts are recalled long after her films are forgotten

Dora appeared with Sydney Tafler in *No Room At The Inn*. When film work coincides with theatre rehearsals she may get less than two hours' sleep

Robert Donat (standing), Francis Wignall and Gladys Henson were with Dora in *The Cure For Love*. So far she has made more than forty films

inactive got her into trouble. Playing the part of a monk in Shaw's *Saint Joan*, she had to sit on the stage doing nothing. Bored, she hit on the idea of knitting in the voluminous sleeves of her habit. As she was walking off in solemn procession with five other monks, a ball of red wool fell down and trailed across the stage. "I was ticked off for that," she recalls.

Dora's long experience in repertory has equipped her to cope effectively with emergencies. In one television sketch she had to make quick changes from an evening dress to a business dress, to a child's party dress and back to the original evening dress. When she tried to make the first change, the zip stuck. Recalling that only the top part of her body would be visible in the next scene, she crammed on the business dress over the evening dress.

But the next change was more difficult. "If I left the evening dress under the child's dress the skirt would show underneath. And I couldn't tear the evening dress because I needed it later. I decided to wear one on top of the other and tuck up the skirt of the evening dress. I must have looked a terribly fat child."

Dora May Broadbent was born at Southport on February 7, 1924. Twelve months later, the family moved to Oldham, where her father took a job in the bobbin business. When she was five, she danced and sang "There's something about a soldier" at a local concert. "She always wanted to go on the stage," says Mrs. Broadbent. "Her ambition was to have her name in lights outside the Palace Theatre, Manchester."

At ten, Dora took dancing lessons. From the age of twelve she danced with a troupe of juveniles in pantomimes at Manchester, Glasgow and the London Hippodrome. When she was fourteen, she was so anxious to start her stage career that she spent a year at a Manchester repertory school, and joined Oldham Repertory Company as an assistant stage manager. This was a polite name for odd-job girl.

At first she was unpaid. Later, she graduated to small parts and got 7s. 6d. a week. The height of her ambition was to be able to walk straight to her dressing-room without having to sweep the stage first. But even when she graduated to lead parts at £5 a week, she still had to help with the chores. When she was fully dressed as the bride in *Quiet Weekend*, she had to put gloves on—to keep her hands clean while she helped move scenery.

At twenty, she changed her name to Dora Bryan and joined Harry Hanson's Court Players. Repertory spells followed in Peterborough, Tunbridge Wells, Westcliff-on-Sea and Colchester. In 1945, she toured Italy with Ensa. Then, with £70 in her pocket, she came to London and took a room in Hampstead at 7s. 6d. a week. By a coincidence, a scenic artist she had known at Oldham had a room in the same house.

For weeks, she unsuccessfully toured agents' offices. When she was almost in despair, the scenic artist, who was working at the Lindsey Theatre, knocked on her door. "The girl who's playing the lead in our new play has fallen ill," he said. "If you think you can manage it, I'll introduce you to the producer." The rôle was Nancy in Patrick Hamilton's *Gaslight*. Having played it at Oldham, she knew the part well and got the job at £3 a week.

On the opening night, Firth Shephard, the producer, who had come to see the original Nancy, saw Dora instead, liked her and offered her a part in one of his plays. After that, Dora never stopped working.

This year her run of good luck broke. Last March she left *The Water Gipsies* and cancelled £2,000 worth of work to have a baby. Three months later she lost the baby, and when she started a specially written ITV series called *Our Dora* last September, she had a nervous breakdown after the first week. "The show started on the exact day my baby should have been born," she says.

Today, after a holiday in Spain and convalescence at her private hotel, she has in view both a West End play and a TV series. Later, she may take a leading rôle in a Broadway musical. Meanwhile, she is busy with odd pieces of work which will help to restore her earnings to their average £4,000 to £5,000 a year. "But what I want most of all," she says, "is a family."

Friends believe that Dora's energy will never allow her to retire from the theatre. Once, following her rule of never turning down work, she agreed to play a mermaid in a film on the morning of a day when she had a 3 p.m. theatre matinée. The mermaid's tail stuck to her body, and when she finally dashed out of the studio she had not had time to dry herself.

After getting caught in a traffic jam at Notting Hill Gate, she arrived at the theatre at 2.55 p.m. "Half the cast were waiting for me at the stage door. I changed just in time, but when I went on I was still wet under my clothes." THE END

Miro backed away from Mark, and his voice rose to a scream. "Hi, Tony!" he yelled. A half-naked figure rushed in . . .

SAPPHIRES ON WEDNESDAY

by MALCOLM GAIR

ILLUSTRATED BY GEORGE DITTON

Mark had the jewels. . . . His job was as good as over. Then the family feud turned into murder

ABOARD the Manhattan, bound for New York, Mark Raeburn waited tensely for Miro Ablondi to leave his cabin. There was a sapphire collar in that cabin—and Mark, a private detective, was being paid to "recover" it.

Mme Malatino, his employer, claimed that her brother Miro had stolen the collar in a fit of petty spite. She offered Mark danger money if he would get it back. "Miro always carries a gun," she told him, "and so must you."

Before accepting the job, Mark satisfied himself that the collar really was Mme Malatino's property and visited her house in Surrey. There he met Audie Malatino, a pretty American girl who had married into the family.

Audie told him she was shortly returning to the States in order to let a house that she owned in May Harbor. But Mark could not tell her about his own trip to America—Mme Malatino had insisted on secrecy. Even Walter Guest, the solicitor who put Mme Malatino in touch with him, knew nothing of Mark's assignment. . . .

The Manhattan ran into heavy seas. Miro, a poor sailor, stayed in his cabin. And Mark

Raeburn began to get desperate. Then, only a few hours from New York, he worked out a plan. . . .

Steve Reigert, Mark's genial cabin-mate, had idly pointed out Robert C. Whylom, president of the shipping line. Mark lost no time. Feigning drunkenness he insulted the furious ship owner, handed over one of Miro Ablondi's visiting cards and said: "You can come and dig for your apology."

A few minutes later an astonished Miro Ablondi, escorted by the master-at-arms, was on his way to the bridge. Mark reckoned he had about fifteen minutes before the hoax was seen through—fifteen minutes in which to find Mme Malatino's collar.

After a quick glance to make sure that he was unobserved, he turned the handle of the door and stepped into Miro's cabin. . . .

PART TWO

Miro Shows His Hand

THE cabin had a look of deliberate wreckage, as though someone had set out on purpose to create chaos. Drawers were half open, with underwear spilling out of them; dirty shirts, shoes, railway directories, travel brochures, a cashmere sweater, packets of cigarettes and a velvet smoking-jacket almost hid the olive-green carpet.

A leather dressing-case stood on the dressing-table. Mark picked it up, emptied it rapidly of a dirty handkerchief, a bottle of mouthwash and a manicure set, and turned it over. The bottom of the case looked solid. But Mark knew what he was doing—he had seen other cases like this. He put his hands on the studs and squeezed. Under a strong, even pressure the studs moved, very slightly, and the bottom of the case came away in his hands, revealing a cavity about an inch deep. In it was a package wrapped in tissue paper.

The package contained a collar of pale blue Kashmir sapphires, table-cut and evenly matched. As they swung in his hand, the lights of the cabin danced and burned from them. Mark pressed them rapidly to his cheek and felt the authentic chill of the sapphire.

He put them in his pocket and took out Mme Malatino's card. On it was written: *Received from my brother Miro, one sapphire collar, stolen from me and now recovered. G. Malatino.* The faint smile returned to his lips as he put this in the place which the sapphires had occupied

Quickly and carefully he replaced the foot of the case, put back the things he had taken out, and stood the case within a centimetre of where he had found it. Then he left the cabin, sauntered round the corner, and made his way rapidly to the Tourist quarters. . . .

Next morning, Mark and Steve stood together among the "Rs" in the great New York Customs shed.

"But how did you know," asked Steve, "that they wouldn't find out who it was that played the trick?"

Mark said: "How could they among two thousand passengers, and half of them sick at that?"

He twiddled the knob of his portable radio. A Customs official reached them, and began his interrogation. Mark turned the radio down, and then up again as he heard a stream of baseball news. Steve danced a few steps when the result of the New York Giants' match came through, and the Customs man smiled. He chalked Mark's bags after a couple of perfunctory questions.

"That's a handy little radio you have there," said Steve.

"It is," said Mark. I wouldn't sell that little radio for a thousand dollars." And he laughed. . . .

Mark felt he owed himself a celebration. It was a celebration that lasted two days, and which ended in the apartment belonging to Steve's cousin, Jim Macdonald.

Mark woke up there, on his third morning in New York. He looked round the room, at the crammed ashtrays, the glasses, the empty bottles; at Steve stretched out and snoring on the sofa, and at Jim, tall and red-haired, asleep in the easy chair with his head on the arm. Then, with an effort, he rose to his feet and made for the door. That, he thought, would teach Steve not to try to outdrink Mark Raeburn.

It was as he was opening the door that the telephone rang. He went back and picked up the receiver and said: "Mr. Macdonald's apartment."

"Is there a Mr. Mark Raeburn there?"

"Yes," Mark said. "I'll fetch him." He went into the bathroom, sponged his head with cold water, and returned to the telephone. "Mark Raeburn speaking."

"Please hold the line, Mr. Raeburn. I have a person-to-person call for you from London, England."

There was a click, and at once, so loud and clear that she might have been in the same room, Mark heard the voice of Mme Malatino.

"Mr. Raeborme?"

"Speaking."

"Good. It is I, Madame Gioia Malatino. I have received your cable. You did well. But now you must listen to me. My brother Miro has telephoned me from May Harbor. He had only just found the loss of the collar. At first he was angry. He disputed my right. I, too, was angry. We quarrelled. But then, after much talk, we are reconciled."

Well, thought Mark, that was fine. That's what it was like to be rich. You had nursery squabbles by transatlantic telephone.

The effect of sponging his head, which had helped him quite a bit, was wearing off, and the little white-painted hall in which he stood was spinning a little.

"We have made an arrangement," Mme Malatino went on. "Miro will keep the collar. In exchange he will give me my mother's ring—and for my mother's ring, Mr. Raeborme, I would give all the sapphires in the world."

Mme Malatino, as Mark could hear, was in great form.

"Now, Mr. Raeborme, I wish you to act as my agent. I wish you to hand the collar to Miro and to obtain in exchange the ring."

Like a couple of spoilt kids, Mark thought. Aloud he said: "Very well. If that's what you want."

"You should go to my nephew's house in May Harbor, in Long Island," Mme Malatino went on. "It is called May Island House, and my nephew is Antonio Ablondi. Everyone knows him and his house. He is a famous architect. You have only to ask. You will go and obtain the ring. It consists of a large diamond between two opals. You must see that you get a genuine ring which has not been—you know—frauded."

"Tampered with."

"Yes. Tampered with. But I have told Miro that you know much about jewels. He will not dare any trick, I think. Yet, to be safe, you must examine the ring first, *before* you hand over the collar. That is understood?"

"Yes. I understand clearly. I'm not to trust your brother in any way."

"No. And you will carry your gun, please."

MARK had no patience with all the nonsense about guns, but he was in no state to argue. "Very well," he said.

"And you should go soon," Mme Malatino said. "Before Miro changes his mind."

"I'll go at once."

"Good. That is right. Are there any questions, Mr. Raeborme?"

"No. It's all clear."

"Goodbye, then."

"Goodbye."

Mark put down the telephone and walked unsteadily into the bedroom in which he was

Continued on page 21

Now Mark had to tell Audie about the murder. "You know Tony Ablondi well?" he asked. Audie said: "Yes, of course"

Every year, George Beadle drives 40,000 miles to two hundred auction sales in all parts of the country. Once he turned unofficial auctioneer himself—at a profit

Money on the scrapheap

by FRANCIS HITCHING

George Beadle sees life as one big bargain basement. He knows how to convert a nation's cast-offs into £50,000 a year

Beadle checks metal prices with Les Smith, his assistant. Metals are his big interest, and Stock Exchange prices are telephoned daily

ON a rainy spring day in 1953, George Beadle was driving through St. Albans, Hertfordshire, when he saw a notice advertising an auction sale. Hoping that it might be a large one, Beadle, a wealthy second-hand dealer and scrap merchant, visited the auctioneer to collect a catalogue. It listed all the furniture and fittings of a thirty-roomed mansion in nearby Putteridge Berry.

On the first day of the sale, scheduled to last seven days, Beadle surprisingly found no other professional buyers at the house. His only competitors for the magnificently carved furniture and rich carpets were eight local residents who had come in the hope of a few bargains for their homes.

For two days, he bought nearly everything offered by the auctioneer. The lots included twenty-six beds, with two mattresses on each, knocked down at half-a-crown a set. Sixteen wardrobes went for five shillings each. Bidding almost on his own, Beadle amassed more than five hundred square yards of lino, about one hundred chairs, fifteen tables, twenty-two sets of fire-irons, and all the kitchen equipment, including a giant stove and more than forty pots and pans. "I would have needed a dozen lorries to have taken it all away," he says.

On the third day, after a newspaper paragraph had brought nearly one hundred of London's second-hand dealers to the house, Beadle turned unofficial auctioneer. He sold to the dealers almost everything he had bought, at a large profit. "It was one of the best sales of my career."

Every year Beadle, a cheerful, thick-set, thirty-seven year old cockney, drives 40,000 miles to two hundred sales anywhere in the British Isles. His two scrapyards in North Kensington have a joint turnover of more than £50,000 a year. He claims that his firm, G.B. Metals, has handled the most versatile range of goods of any second-hand dealer in the country. "I'll gamble on anything," he says.

This year, at the closing-down sale of the Tivoli cinema in the Strand, he bought the Wurlitzer concert organ for £230. Within a week, he satisfied himself that nobody would buy it complete. He dismantled it, found a scrap-metal buyer for the pure tin pipes, gave a number of reeds to a society for the preservation of organs, and sold the console and keyboard to Robin Richmond, the television organist.

At another sale, in a builder's yard, Beadle paid £1 for a lot marked: Rubble from the Houses of Parliament. "When I saw it, I was staggered," he says. "There was more than two thousand tons."

Most of it was impossible to sell. But Beadle managed to dispose of the gargoyles from the roof as porch ornaments, and sent a shipment of stone to an American film star for a new wing on her Hollywood house. Some of the smaller pieces of rubble were used for tombstones. Finally, after lying in the yard for three years, the rubble was carted to Canvey Island to form breakwaters during the floods of 1953.

Beadle's eager hunt for bargains occasionally brings embarrassing consequences. In 1939, after buying cannons once used for starting the Henley Regatta, he was locked in a police station for three hours on a charge of possessing firearms in time of war.

Beadle and his brother John, who owns a similar business, ran into other difficulties when they bought a private zoo. It consisted of thirty rabbits, twelve snakes, three alligators, two foxes and a Himalayan bear.

After the sale, they could find nobody to feed the animals. Rather than let them go hungry

for a night, the two brothers went into a nearby town and bought three hundred loaves—the entire stock of the local bakery—forty cabbages and lettuces, some horsemeat, and a tin of treacle.

All the animals ate ravenously except the bear. To coax it into having some food, John Beadle climbed into the cage with the pot of treacle, and calmed the animal by tickling it behind its ears. Then he poured the treacle down its throat, and offered it some grass, which it began to eat.

Without warning, the bear choked. The grass was sticking on the treacle. John Beadle pushed his hand between the bear's teeth, and cleared its mouth. Then he gave it a drink from a bottle of water, and left the bear contentedly lying on the floor of the cage clutching the tin of treacle.

Though he has developed an eye for antiques and oddities, Beadle is primarily a metal buyer.

Since the war, metal prices have varied violently. Copper is worth £200 a ton today, but was worth £400 eighteen months ago. Scrap iron is now at its highest ever: £7 a ton. Before the war, copper was £35 a ton, zinc £5, lead £10, and scrap iron ten shillings.

Beadle says: "The price of metal is so high that almost every housewife has enough scrap in her attic or cellar to earn £2-£3." The lead piping on most houses is worth between £200 and £300. Beadle values the lead on the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral at £10,000.

Armed with this expert knowledge, Beadle is often amused by amateur buyers who go to sales hoping for a bargain. At a Yorkshire sale he sat between two women who started bidding against each other when a bacon-slicer was put up by the auctioneer. "I might have given ten shillings for it," says Beadle. "One of the women bought it for £87."

He admits that he and other professional buyers sometimes make mistakes. At a sale in Croydon, there were some copper laundry vats about forty feet in diameter. At the top, the metal was thick, but the constant movement of water lower down had worn the metal paper-thin. "There were ten experts there that day," says Beadle, "and every one of us lost money."

LUCK plays a part in the success of any second-hand dealer. Once, Beadle bought a sack of brass and found a six-ounce gold cigarette case in the middle. Clearing out sacks from a cellar, he found a four hundred year old tapestry worth hundreds of pounds. In a disused loft, he discovered forty rolls of rare Victorian wallpaper in perfect condition.

Beadle thinks much of his shrewd bargaining ability comes from his upbringing. He was born in North Kensington in 1918. His father was a junk merchant, pushing a barrow from house to house collecting bric-a-brac, and, before the war, Beadle did the same job. It was tough. One of his first memories is of walking with a barrow twenty miles from Kensington to St. Albans to pick up a load of used car batteries. When he arrived, the dealer had already given them away. "I realized then that I was in a hard business," he says.

When Beadle was only fifteen, one of Britain's leading art connoisseurs gave him a faked Gainsborough. "It is the only forgery that has ever taken me in, and I won't have it in the house," he told Beadle, who put the painting on top of his barrow and began to walk back home.

Half-way down a street of antique shops, he was stopped by an excited dealer who offered him £5 for the picture frame. Beadle accepted, then began to remove the painting. The dealer tried to persuade him to leave it alone, but Beadle said blandly: "The picture is £50 extra." After a lot of haggling, the dealer agreed. Says Beadle: "The picture was almost worthless, but he shouldn't have tried to fool me into thinking that he only wanted the frame."

Fifteen years later, Beadle missed a picture

Beadle has a close watch kept on his goods at sales. Thieves once took a filter press weighing more than a ton

bargain. At a Hertfordshire sale, a £10,000 water-colour by Constable was sold for £1 while Beadle was on the roof of the house valuing the metal sheeting.

When Beadle went to his first sale, he had only £13 in his pocket. It was not enough: the auction was of government surplus, and a twenty-five per cent deposit was needed on everything bought. Beadle waited until the last six lots of the day, and bid a total of £300 for 32,000 lb. of nails, and twenty cartons of radio spares.

While the auctioneer's back was turned, he ran out of the auction rooms, jumped in a borrowed lorry, and drove at top speed to pick up the two lots, which were lying in a field. He took the first to a builder's yard, and the second to a radio dealer. Within two hours he was back at the sale with more than enough money to pay the auctioneer. "But if those two buyers had not been willing to take the goods," he says, "the career of George Beadle might have come to a sudden end."

Thieves know that there are good pickings to be had at sales, and Beadle has learned to watch out for them. During his first year as a dealer, he left a £170 filter press unguarded. "Within half an hour it had gone," says Beadle, "in spite of the fact that it weighed more than a ton." During the closing-down sale of a large Holborn restaurant, someone stole the grand piano five minutes before it was due to be auctioned.

Beadle's career was cut short when he joined the army in 1939. He was invalided out two years later, and for the rest of the war worked as an electrician with a film company.

AFTER the war, he worked for three years buying antiques and scrap from bomb-damaged houses in London. His work gave him some curious glimpses of history. In the house where Lady Hamilton lived during the 1780's, he bought 150 mirrors, the smallest four feet square. "She must have been vain," says Beadle.

Shortly afterwards, he was locked for two hours in the library of Neville Chamberlain's house. The door was made of mock books, and he could not find the catch. Finally, his shouts were heard by a workman.

At the Duke of Marlborough's house, he bought thirty tons of marble, including eight tables, for £25. It was worth at least £2,000. But he was not so lucky with a Victorian zinc bath which came from Disraeli's house. "I took it round almost every antique dealer in the city," says Beadle, "but I just could not prove that Disraeli bathed here."

Beadle sympathizes with people who believe that things are not always what they seem. When Ealing film studios were being sold, Beadle bought a variety of lots. One of the cheapest was a safe, for which he bid five shillings. At the end of the sale, he commented to a fellow-dealer: "For a four-hundredweight metal safe, that was a good buy."

At the same time, he gave it a tap with his toe. The safe shattered into pieces. Says Beadle: "It was a plaster dummy, made for a film."

THE END

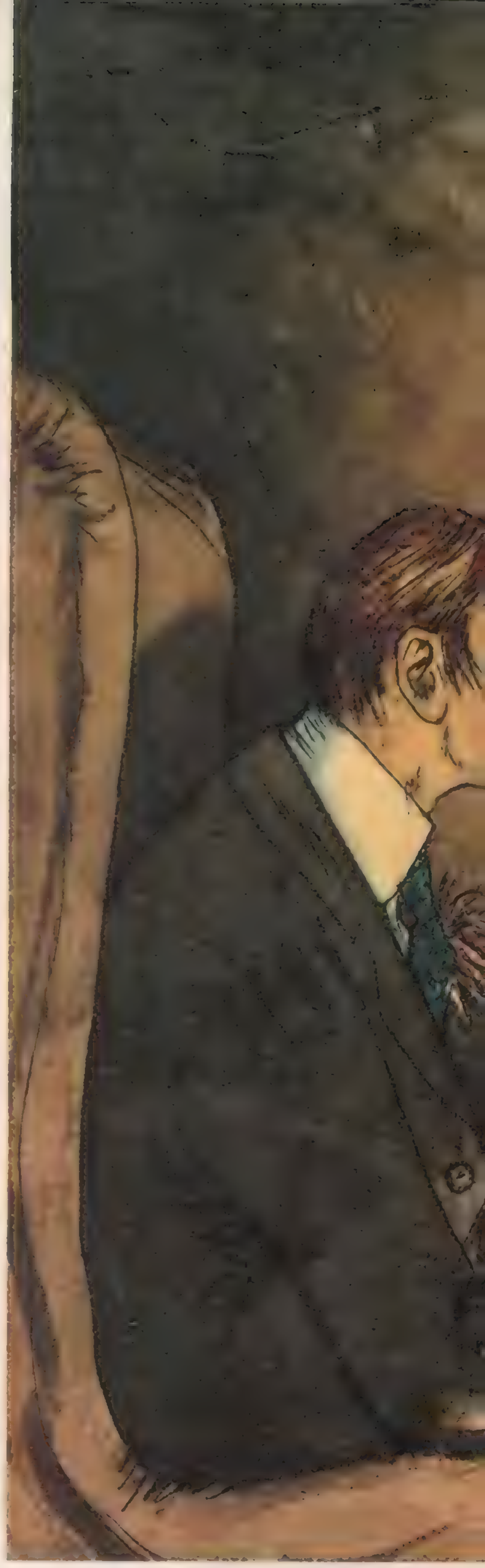
When the Tivoli cinema in the Strand closed down, the organ went to Beadle. "I'll gamble on anything" sums up his quest for bargains

The Courtship of Uncle Conal

by ***HUGH MICHAEL HOGAN***

ILLUSTRATED BY RICHARD O. ROSE

Well, it wasn't really a courtship at all. It was a battle with Ireland's fiercest dragon



When Bridget came in, Conal was

My Uncle Conal was a fine, big, red-haired man, about six foot four, and freckled. Whenever I looked at him, I was reminded of the gable of a red brick house, with the sun shining brightly on the windows. His eyes were light blue, and inclined to be watery—especially when he laughed, which was often.

"Hah, 'tis good to see you again, Michael," he said. "D'ye never get tired o' comin' here for your holidays?"

I shook my head.

"What is it, then, fetches you back year after year?" He was laughing, now.

I was only fifteen. I was too young, then, to have begun to analyse happiness. I could not tell him that I loved, above all things, the sense of freedom I enjoyed when I was staying with him, and the animals, and the smells of a farm, the lush green of the Irish grass and the freshness of Irish skies, the browns and purples of the Wicklow Hills; the feeling of well-being and peace and the stories Conal told me.

"It must be the food," I said.

"Is that it?" He was chuckling. "You like yer Aunt Bridget's cooking?"

"That's it, I think."

My stomach was comfortably full of a most splendid breakfast: ham and kidney and mushrooms. I thought of all the other wonderful food I would have before I went back home: oatcakes and cream, potatoes done in their jackets and crowned with farm butter; home-fed pork, apple dumplings, and strawberry flan.

We walked on in silence for some minutes. It was a perfect morning, with the sun climbing swiftly into a clear blue sky. A lark sang in the field beyond the hedge, and over to the left the hills of Wicklow were peeping from blankets of blue-grey mist.

We climbed to the top of the field and turned there, my Uncle Conal fishing in his pocket for his corn-cob pipe. Below us, smoke curled lazily into the air from the thatched roof of the farmhouse. Our footsteps, dark against the dewy grass, led back to it. There was a smell of clover.

My Uncle Conal stuffed tobacco into his pipe with a finger as hard and horny as the blackthorn he carried. He struck a match on the seat of his breeches and puffed out clouds of acrid smoke. When the pipe was drawing well he put his hands into his breeches pockets and looked dreamily away towards the hills.

"Funny you should say that about Aunt Bridget's cooking," he said. "D'ye know, now, as it happens, the question o' that cookin' is most intimately connected with my fortunes." He puffed out more clouds of smoke, tightly closing one eye against its sting. The other, bright blue and twinkling, he fixed on me. "Shall I tell you about it?"

My Uncle Conal, I have always thought, is one of the finest of storytellers in a land that is famed for them, and not for the world would I have stopped him then. Without speaking, I climbed up on to the fence and waited for him to begin. . . .

"Well, now, it was like this, then." He turned and leaned against the fence. "It must have been, aye, thirty years ago. Me father had been dead about two years, and I was livin' in the farm there all on me own. Your father had gone to England"—he looked up and winked—"to make his fortune. Never liked farmin', didn't Rory.

"Times were good, then. I'd a decent bit o' land, a few head o' cattle, and divil a thing to bother me, at all. Sure, I'd nothin' whatever to do but work from dawn till sunset, and everything in the world would have been fine. Instead o' that, however, what did I go and do but fall in love with a wee slip of a girl."

I thought of my Aunt Bridget's ample form and wondered who it was.

"Aye, a wee little slip of a thing: yer Aunt Bridget."

"Did you propose to her?"

"Propose?" my uncle said. "No, I did not, then, Michael. It wasn't as simple as that, d'ye see. To start with, sure every young blood in the ten parishes had his eye on her. Hah, she was the sweetest little thing you ever did see: red-haired, apple-cheeked, with eyes as green as St. Patrick's ring. Beautiful, she was.

"Propose, is it? Indeed, I did not. To do so would have been fatal; I'd have been out on me ear at once. D'ye see, she could have had her pick from any number of us. There was at least ten men would have given their eyes for her, and all of them better off than me. Begob, no, I didn't propose."

"Then how did you get her?"

"Hah, I'm comin' to that." With an enormous thumb he put several hundred pounds' pressure upon the tobacco in his pipe, and puffed furiously. "Well, now, there was another factor in the situation, too: she had a mother. And I could see it was the mother was the vital one. Fellers would come from as far away as Drogheda to pay court to young Bridget, but divil a one was in a hurry to wed her. And the reason wasn't hard to find: 'twas because of the mother."

"Was she——?"

"She was a dragon."

My Uncle Conal put his arms over the fence and looked away over the valley. I could see

hoked with love. He had to fight not to look at her. But if he was going to trick her tartar of a mother he had to seem indifferent . . .

that the memory of my Aunt Bridget's mother was one which was painful to him.

"A dragon, Michael, God rest her soul. Sharp and domineerin'. 'Twas the mother was keepin' me bold Bridget single, for although there was plenty willin' to marry her, there wasn't a man that would take on the mother. And there was one thing as plain as a Connaughtman's cuss: no man would get one without the other.

"Hah, 'twas the fine situation. There, on the one hand, was me beautiful Bridget—a dream, a queen, all peaches and cream; and on the other, one of the sharpest creatures the good God ever put breath into. Hah, she was a tartar."

"What did you do, Uncle Conal?"

"Do? Well, now, for a long time I did just what the others did. I called at the house several times, and I could see that she liked me—Bridget, I mean. I thought about askin' her to marry me, but then, like the others, I decided it wasn't worth it."

"Having the mother, you mean?"

"Aye. Nothin' was worth that. I got on with me farmin'."

"What happened? To make you change your mind, I mean?"

"I saw her."

"Aunt Bridget?"

"Aye, one Sunday, about six months after I'd last called at the house. I'd been goin' to the early Mass, and never saw her there. Then one day I went to the later one, and she was sittin' at the end of the bench just opposite me. God forgive me, I don't know to this day what that sermon was about, but I knew then that I'd have to have Bridget, come all the divils in hell."

"So you waited for her?"

"I did not, then. When I left the church I got straight into me trap, and I drove smartly away down the road. On the way home it occurred to me that I might find meself havin' to do quite a bit of thinkin', so I stopped off at Johnny Quinn's for a bottle of malt. And when the day was over, I built up the fire and got it out.

"Hah, there's nothin' like malt to make a man think. Before the bottle was half dead I had me plan."

"What was it?"

"I'm comin' to that in a minute. But 'twas obvious to me from the first that it was useless to start with proposals. Instead, I'd work on

the mother. And, like any good general, Michael, I'd aim at the enemy's weak points. There were three of them: she was tight-fisted, pious, and a damn fine cook."

He straightened up, pulled his old tweed hat down and prodded me with his blackthorn. "Shall we be walkin' on then?"

I got down off the fence and fell into step beside him. As we topped the ridge, he paused and, raising his stick, pointed to a whitewashed cottage away down in the valley.

"It was there that they lived, the two of them. And it was there I went in me pony and trap, the followin' evening. Hah, all dandied up I was, too, with a bran' new suit, an' a billy-cock hat, an' a flower in me button-hole, too. And, dammit, I could have saved meself the trouble, for when I got inside the house 'twas as black as the Earl o' Hell's workin' waistcoat. There was only one little lamp in the house, and that an oil-lamp."

"'You're welcome, Conal Donelin,' sez Mrs. Brannigan. That was their name: Brannigan. She sounded crafty, and I knew she was wonderin' what I'd come for.

"'You're very kind, ma'am,' sez I.

"'Will you be taking a cup of tea?'

"'Well, now,' sez I, 'if it wouldn't be too much trouble for you, ma'am, sure there's nothin' I'd like better in all the world.'

"'Bridget!' she cries, and the door opens softly behind me. I got to me feet and bowed, but I scarcely looked at young Bridget. I didn't dare. The whole success of me plan lay in affectin' indifference. She gave me good evenin' and went out to put the kettle on.

"'Are you keepin' busy?' sez Mrs. Brannigan. "Tis a long time since you honoured us with your company.'

"'Well, now, ma'am,' sez I, 'busy enough.'

"'It's nice of you to look in,' sez she, tellin' me to get on with it. 'Did you happen to be passin' by, then?'

"'Well, now,' sez I, 'it's funny you should say that, ma'am, for the truth of the matter is, I've come to see you specially.'

"'Have you, now?' I could see her eyes harden. 'And what could I be doin' for you at all, Mr. Donelin?'

"'Ma'am,' sez I, 'I'd like your advice.'"

My Uncle Conal nudged me in the ribs. "Man, Michael, you should have seen the old dragon's face when I said that. She'd been expectin' me to ask for her daughter's hand, d'ye see.

"'Advice is it?' sez she.

"'Your advice, ma'am. It's about me household.'

"Just then Bridget comes in with the tea. She sits down by her mother, and I have to fight not to look at her. Fair choked with me love, I was.

"I stirred me tea. 'Yes, ma'am. Your advice, that's what I'd like now As you know, I'm a bachelor. I might say, I've every intention of remainin' one—no disrespect to your daughter, here, but the state seems to suit me, ma'am. But it has its difficulties.' I looked at her, and then said bluntly: 'Ma'am, I need somebody to look after me household for me.'

"She looks at me long. I can see, now that she thinks I'm not after her daughter, that she's much less crafty than before.

"'Somebody to look after things,' I sez. I held up me hand. 'Now, I know what you'll say: that nobody'll want to come into that house the way it is Well, I agree with you. But I'm plannin' to have it altered, d'ye see.'

"'Alterations, is it, Mr. Donelin?'

"'It is that. Sure, I couldn't expect anybody to want to work and live in a house the way that one is. I was thinkin' I'd have the old range taken out of the kitchen, and maybe have one of the upstairs bedrooms turned into a bathroom. And I've decided, dearly as I love the beautiful soft light these little lamps do give' —I nodded at her paraffin lamp as I spoke, 'twas smokin' like a tripe factory—'I've decided to have the gas laid on.'

"'The gas!'

"'The gas, ma'am.' By the look on

her face, you'd think I'd said I was havin' the moon moved into me front parlour.

"Mrs. Brannigan's hard old eyes got harder. 'Sure, it'll be costing you a fortune, Mr. Donelin.'

"I nodded. 'It won't be cheap, of course. But there's one thing I'll tell you, Mrs. Brannigan, ma'am: whoever comes into my house to look after it is not goin' to work like a slave. Hah, I've seen me poor old mother near black in the face with the smoke from that damned range. I'm goin' to modernize.'

"'Well, now!' sez Mrs. Brannigan.

"'Exactly so.' I waited a bit. Then, when I could see she was picturin' all the things I'd been tellin' her about, I broached the subject. 'I was wonderin', ma'am, if you'd be so kind as to

FACES—I

Some faces do not speak. They are books in which not a line is written, save perhaps a date.

H. W. Longfellow

tell me where I'd get the right kind of person to look after me household for me. 'Tis too much for me alone, with the farmin' an' all.'

"Hah, the shot went home. I could see her turnin' it over in her head.

"What kind of person, Mr. Donelin, did you have in mind, then?' she sez at last.

"It was me chance. She was takin' the bait beautifully. 'Well, now,' says I, 'what I'd like, and what I'll get, will be two entirely different things, ma'am. What I'd like, of course, is a nice, clean, kindly, respectable woman. Not too young, but not old, either. And a good cook: I'm sick of livin' on scraps. In fact, Mrs. Brannigan, ma'am, what I'd really like most of all would be somebody exactly like yourself, now. Though, of course, I wouldn't presume to ask you, ma'am.'

"She looks at me in that hard, crafty way she had. 'Well, Mr. Donelin, just supposing now, that you were to ask me. And supposing, just for the sake of argument, that I was to say yes. Now, what would I do with this place at all?'

"'With your house, ma'am? Sure, couldn't you sell it, then?'

"Hah, it was the right thing I'd said there, Michael, me boy. I could see that the prospect of a few Jimmy O'Goblins wasn't exactly distasteful to her.

"'But what about Bridget?' she sez.

"'Your daughter?' sez I, pretendin' I'd not thought of her. 'Hah, well, I suppose she could come along, too, if she likes. Sure, it's a big enough house for three, isn't it?'

"I could feel Bridget bridling. She got up and rattled the tea things. I began to take me leave.

"'Well, Mrs. Brannigan,' sez I, 'if you feel you'd like to think about it at all, sure I'll let the matter rest there. I might tell you, ma'am, there's nobody I'd rather have in me house, God bless you. Shall I leave you to think about it for a day or two, now?'

"She came to the door with me. 'Well, I'll see,' sez she. 'I'll see.'

"Man, Michael, I could see 'twas as good as done. I went home by way of Johnny Quinn's that night, I well remember. 'Twas the fine night I made of it, too. . . ."

By now we had almost reached the road to the village. We rested for a moment while my Uncle Conal effected some minor repairs to his pipe. Then we continued on our way.

"What happened?" I said. "Did she come?"

"Mrs. Brannigan? Of course she came. She was in there almost as soon as they got the gas turned on. Sold her house for good money, too. What would you expect?"

"And Aunt Bridget?"

"Well, now, I gave her a month or two. No, three, bedad!"

"Before you married her?"

"Aye. D'ye see, I waited till her mother suggested it. The whole point of me plan was to make out it was the mother I was after. For the housekeepin' alone. Don't ye see?"

"No."

"God help us, didn't I tell you, then, that your Aunt Bridget had red hair and green eyes, man? Did you ever hear tell of a woman with red hair and green eyes that didn't have the Divil in her? Hah! Well, I married Bridget. I took her away for the honeymoon—three days of it. I——"

"I say, that was rather short, wasn't it?"

"It was. I told her we shouldn't stay longer because I didn't like the thought of her poor dear mother bein' all alone in that big house. Oh, man, she was wild. I could see the trouble risin'.

"We went home, with your Aunt barely civil to me. The poor girl was heartscalded. The day after we got back I took her mother into Dublin on the razzle. We went to the zoo, the pictures, the Gresham, and I bought her a few knick-knacks. It was a right spree.

"When we got back, me bold Bridget was abed. I'd known she would be. We had a glass of malt down in the kitchen—the mother and me—and we sang a bit, too. 'Mother Machree,' I gave her. 'Twas a good voice I had in those days, too."

"Aunt Bridget was cross, I bet."

"Cross? Mad as a bedbug!"

"What did she say?"

"Nothing. . Not a damned thing. I knew, then, I was on the right tack Next day, when I came back from work, there was a silence you could have cut with a knife. I could see they'd been at it all morning. It was no better by nightfall, and I was sure me plan was workin'."

"Then what did you do?"

"Do? Well, now, I praised the mother, that's what I did. Begob, I never stopped praisin' her. I praised her bread, her bedmakin', her washin' and her food. I fairly roared me approval.

"Most of all, I praised her food. 'Bridget,' sez I, 'isn't it the lucky man I am, now, to have a woman like your mother to look after me? Did you ever hear tell of a better housekeeper? Did you ever see a cleaner, better-run home than this, from here to Kerry, with your mother to look after it? Did you ever in all your life taste finer food?'

"And Bridget just sat there, eyes smoulderin' with hate, not sayin' a word. And I playin' up that I never noticed. 'Mrs. Brannigan, ma'am,' I sez across the table, 'I bless the day you came into this house. Me guardian angel must have been saving you specially for me.'"

UNCLE CONAL puffed heroically, rolling the smoke with relish around his tongue.

"And, of course, it happened. It had to happen. Me plan was a beauty. The silences got thicker and thicker. By the end of six weeks they were strong enough to walk on. And then, one night, just as I was comin' home for the day, the storm broke.

"'Twas lucky I wasn't in the house at the time. The kitchen window was open, and as I came across the yard I could hear them at it. Oh, man, the things those two said that night would curl your hair. Mother and daughter? 'Twas more like a battle to the death between two Kilkenny cats on a clothes line. At one stage it got so bad I did seriously think of goin' in to separate them."

"What did you do?"

"Do? Nothin'! I left them to it. I went out behind the cowshed and smoked me pipe till they'd quietened down. When I went inside, me charmin' Bridget was in bed again, and me bold Mrs. Brannigan was weepin' by the fire.

"'Now,' says I to meself, 'is the time to strike.'"

"What did you say, Uncle?"

"Say? Sure, the honey just poured from me lips. Upstairs I went and fetched your Aunt Bridget, and oh, such a talkin'-to I gave them, all about charity, and meekness, and lovin' one another. God forgive me for sayin' so, but 'twas the beautiful sermon I preached that night. And then, just when I'd got them so as they couldn't tell pig's foot from pork. I told them that I'd invited the priest to supper the followin' evening."

"The priest?"

"Hah, I knew he'd accept, of course. Dear old Father Fitzgerald it

was, God rest his soul. A rare one for his vittles, was Father Fitz. He had a lazy old faggot of a housekeeper, and sure he was always glad to accept a decent meal.

"Begob, it was the fine supper we had, too. And then I said me piece.

"'Have you enjoyed your food, Father?' sez I, soft-like.

"He had. 'Don't you think, now,' sez I, 'that we ought to pass a vote of thanks to the cook?'

"'I do,' says he, 'Oh, I do, indeed!'

"'And there she is,' sez I, indicatin' Mrs. Brannigan. 'Don't you think, now, Father, that I'm the luckiest man alive to be havin' the fine cook like this one? D'you know, now, me little darlin' wife here has nothin' at all to do in the house. Nothin' at all. She might just as well be helpless altogether, the way everything's done by the mother. Isn't it the lucky man I am, now, Father?'

"'Oh, it is, Conal,' sez Father Fitz. 'Indeed it is, then. Lucky's not the word for it.'

"Well, you should have seen your Aunt Bridget's face. I thought she would have the hysterics. She went white and then pink, and then white and then red, and all of a sudden she lets fly with a wail that would have done credit to the *bokeentha* herself, and goes tearin' up the stairs. There's a moment of terrible silence, and then the slam of the bedroom door.

"'What's the matter,' sez I. 'Have I said something wrong, then?' I looks about me, perplexed-seemin'.

"Mrs. Brannigan herself it was answered. 'Conal,' sez she, 'this house is too small for me daughter and me together. 'Tis I that will be leaving in the morning.'

"'You'll what?'

"'I'll be off. 'Tis the good, kindly man indeed you are, but 'tis I that will be leaving in the morning.'

"Father Fitz was quick to the rescue. 'I admire you, Mrs. Brannigan,' sez he, 'I do admire you. 'Tis the well-preserved conscience you have, God bless you.' He looks at me, and then at her again. 'A terrible thing it would be for you, I can see, to have to come between a husband and his wife.' He looks at me again, over his spectacles—and, Michael, I tell you, I'll never know to me dyin' day whether or not he was winkin'. Sez he: 'And where will you go, ma'am, when you leave this house?'

"She starts to sniff. His Reverence goes over and puts an arm around her shoulders.

"'Tell me, now,' sez he, sweetly, 'would you consider becomin' me housekeeper?'

"She looks at him pious-like.

"'Tis a most meritorious thing,' sez Father Fitz, 'to work for the church, you know. . . .'"

We were nearing old Father Fitzgerald's church now. The sun was hot, and my Uncle Conal took off his hat and mopped his face.

"So you won," I said.

"Hah, I did so." He lowered a great red mat of eyebrow in a delicious, sunlit wink.

I laughed. "And what did Aunt Bridget say?"

"Bridget? She never showed her face till I got back from takin' her mother to the presbytery."

"Was she mad?"

"She was, too, the same one. She was waitin' for me in the kitchen. She turned to face me when she heard me footsteps, and the light of battle was in her green eye.

"I stopped dead still and looked at her straight. Sure, she didn't know what was comin' at all.

"And then I laughed. God help me, I just threw up me head and laughed till the tears rolled down me two cheeks. I laughed till I feared the roof would come in on us. I couldn't stop. And then I took her in me arms and I crushed her like cattle-cake. I kissed the poor girl till she was nearly choked, and then it was she understood. I'll never forget the look on her face that day.

"'Conal Donelin,' sez she, laughin' and cryin' the while, ''tis you are the clever one.'"

My Uncle Conal paused. "Hah," he said softly. "'Twas the fine time we had from then on." THE END

Sapphires on Wednesday

Continued from page 15

supposed to have spent the night. Twenty minutes later, after a cold shower, a shave and a pick-me-up, he felt better, but with the beginnings of a hangover in his head and stomach.

After a quiet breakfast he decided to walk to Pennsylvania Station. The electrifying New York air was fighting an even battle with his hangover. Already he felt surprisingly better.

He reached Pennsylvania Station at 8.27 a.m.; a train for May Harbor left at 9.05. He bought coffee from a slot machine and sat on a bench, and then, on the train, fell asleep. When he awoke, the sun was high and warm, and he was desperately thirsty.

He looked at his watch. In twenty minutes the train would be at May Harbor. He had slept most of the way up Long Island.

And now he began to feel profoundly uneasy. Somehow, somewhere, something was wrong. . . .

The station at May Harbor was small, and from it he could see only a filling station, a row of three shops and a handful of houses in the distance. Mark got down from the train stiffly. He walked into a drugstore and asked for a large orange juice.

"May Island House," he said, "where's that?"

The soda-jerker looked up. "It's quite a way," he said. "You go down the road here about half a mile. Then you'll come to a small private road."

"Thanks," Mark said.

"Mr. Ablondi's not home, you know that? The place is shut up."

"There'll be someone there," Mark said. He put down the price of the drink, went out and set off down the road. His spirits began to rise a little, and by the time he reached the private road and saw the shingle with May Island House painted on it, he felt something like normal.

The house was an architectural oddity. It looked like a child's drawing magnified a thousand times and carried out mostly in glass but also with bits in concrete, metal and even in wood. Mark approached it doubtfully. It didn't have anything that looked like a front door. There was a kind of open end on his left, but it wasn't clear whether it was an entrance, or only a bit of the house which the builder had left unfinished.

He was saved from further uncertainty when a voice called his name.

"Hey—Mr. Raeburn?"

Mark looked up and saw Miro Ablondi standing on a kind of balcony not more than eighteen feet away.

"Yes," he said. "I'm Mark Raeburn."

"Good. Come through the porch, Mr. Raeburn, and I'll meet you."

Miro waved towards the open bit of the house. His manner was quite normal, businesslike rather than friendly, but not unfriendly either. Mark turned towards what Miro had called the porch. It led straight in from the garden with no break in the paved path on which Mark was walking.

Miro was waiting for him. "Come in, Mr. Raeburn, and sit down." He indicated a large settee covered in off-white leather. "I'll get some drinks. What will you have?"

"Just a glass of water, thanks."

"Nothing else?" There was the same businesslike politeness in the voice; nothing less, nothing more. Miro poured a glass of water from a jug and handed it to Mark, mixing for himself a drink which Mark guessed was Campari and soda.

"Well, what do you think of this house?" Miro sat back in a big easy chair that matched the settee.

"I hardly know," said Mark. "It's so unlike anything I've seen before."

"I'll show you over it later." Miro smiled. It was rather a hard smile, but still, it was a smile. It made Mark uncomfortable.

"Thanks," he said. "I'd like to."

"Good." Miro nodded. His glance, which had been resting on the cigarette he was smoking, suddenly turned on Mark. It was, like his sister's, an odd, heavy kind of gaze.

"Now tell me, Mr. Raeburn," said Miro. "Don't you feel a little ashamed of yourself?" His voice was not exactly hostile, but it had a note of severity in it.

"I don't think so, Mr. Ablondi. Why should I?" Mark spoke smoothly, but he was inwardly uneasy.

"Well, you've committed what, in the eyes of the law, is a crime. And I suppose you were behind that stupid business that caused me to be hauled before the captain. Couldn't you have thought of something less offensive to Mr. Whylom?" Miro's voice was dry and disapproving.

"I had to use the means that were open to me," Mark said. "My client gave me evidence which satisfied me that I was recovering stolen property."

Miro raised his heavy eyebrows. "Well, let's not squabble about that. You have the collar?"

"Yes," Mark said, "I have the collar." He was, in fact, wearing it next to his skin in a washleather money belt he had bought the day before.

"Good," Miro said. "The ring's upstairs. My sister said you know something about gem stones. I don't doubt she told you to examine it carefully in case I'd put in bits of coloured glass. I'll give you every opportunity."

He rose to his feet and began to talk about the house. It was, he said, a kind of shop window for his young architect nephew, Tony, who had bought an old barn to use as a studio, and had added to it as he became rich and fashionable. He showed Mark the soundproofed music-room and the kitchen, and finally he led the way into the studio.

This was the old barn, a vast room as big as a church. Tony Ablondi had kept its original character; it was still fundamentally a barn. Along the whole of one end wall ran a kind of shelf or desk, covered with plans and papers.

"Your nephew's at home, then?" Mark asked. He remembered that the soda-jerker had said that Mr. Ablondi was away.

Miro smiled. "Yes, Tony's at home. He's doing some work for a Texas oil millionaire who's as crazy as a coot. He makes Tony travel about secretly and give out phoney information. . . . Gee, it's warm in here."

It *was* warm. The great room was full of heat, and Mark, who was still wearing a jacket, found it oppressive.

"I'll open the windows," Miro said, and he walked over to one. The window was high, with a sash. Miro pushed upwards, with no result.

"You know," he said, "it's a thing Tony never will admit, but these windows jam."

"Let me try," said Mark. He put his hands up and pushed the sash. The window opened quite easily. When he turned round he was looking into the barrel of a gun.

"Don't think I wouldn't use it, Mr. Raeburn," Miro said quickly, looking into Mark's eyes.

Mark did not feel afraid, and he would not, at the moment, allow himself to feel rage and humiliation. If

MY BROTHER Eric

THIS is the only picture we have of my brother as a child; it was taken by a photographer in Birmingham, I imagine in the summer of 1904. I can guess how much Eric must have hated being "dolled up" in that white serge suit with all its frills; we always hated formal clothes.

On Sundays we used to parade for lunch with our parents, I in a stiff dress of *broderie anglaise*, he in a sailor suit, or, later on, an Eton jacket. After Papa had peeled a pear for us we were dismissed for the day—and what a joy it was to change into old clothes and get really dirty!

Papa was a business man and wanted my brother to follow him. But somehow it didn't work out. Eric was always scribbling. He had a poem published by the time he was twelve and wrote a pantomime which was performed at his prep school.

His first public appearance, as far as I remember, was at the Grand Theatre, Hanley; the comedian who was starring there asked the audience to "join in the chorus," whereupon my precocious brother ran down to the orchestra rail and led the singing in a piping treble.

As children, we went to the theatre every week; from ten years old, to the music hall as well. We re-enacted every play in the nursery afterwards, with Eric as the producer. He always took the best parts for himself.

I remember the family being outwardly horrified, though secretly admiring, when he took his first job—as a waiter in Nice. He did this to earn his fare back to London and his second job, as assistant stage-manager at His Majesty's Theatre.

While at Cambridge he played female parts with the Marlowe Society and the Footlights. Though now well over six foot, he stood only five feet seven inches then.

There had never been a writer in our family before, nor any member of it whose name appeared in the newspapers. It was a sad blow to Papa when our young genius became in turn a journalist, an actor, a novelist and finally a B.B.C. official. But he was proud of him all the same. I remember my brother, who by that time had had several plays performed in the West End, asking Mamma why the Old Man never said whether he enjoyed them.

It turned out that Papa was too shy to make any comment; actually he bored the life out of his friends by showing them the press notices.

WHO IS THIS FAMOUS BROTHER? See page 22

he dropped his hands now, if he walked over and tried to take Miro's gun away, Miro probably—almost certainly—wouldn't shoot. But he *might*. He might be a bit crazy. For a few hundred pounds the risk wasn't worth it.

"Turn round, Mr. Raeburn," Miro said. "Keep your hands as high as they'll go."

Mark turned, and in a moment felt his Luger lifted out of his hip pocket.

"Okay. Turn round again."

Mark turned. Miro was backing away from him, holding the Luger wrapped in a handkerchief. There were beads of sweat on his forehead. Then, suddenly, he shouted: "Hi, Tony! Tony—*Tony*!" He was looking at the door and his voice had risen to a scream, a panic yell for help.

A couple of seconds passed, and then the door of the studio flew open. The man who came in was about forty, short, dark and thickset. He wore nothing but a towel round his waist, and his hair was damp. His sallow, intelligent-looking face was lit up with alarm.

"Miro!" he said. "What the hell——"

The Luger smashed out and for a fleeting instant Mark thought that Miro had fired at him. Then the gun fired again, and again, and the body of Tony Ablondi jerked and spun. There was a heavy thud as his body hit the uncarpeted floor.

THE heavy fumes of cordite drifted slowly, and Mark coughed. Miro was breathing in shuddering, rasping gasps, like a man finishing a fast mile. He dropped Mark's Luger on to the floor and took the other gun into his right hand.

"You see now that I shoot," he said. "Don't try anything."

"I won't try anything," Mark said. "I feel a bit sick. Can I sit down?"

In Miro's eyes there was a look of open contempt. He said: "Yes. You can sit down—on the floor, where you are." Miro paused, and then went on: "You realize the situation you are in?"

Mark slipped down on to the floor. "The situation I'm in? I don't understand."

"No," said Miro. "You don't understand anything." His breathing was almost normal now, but there was something abnormal about the depth of contempt in his voice. Anyone who despised another human being as much as that, Mark thought, must be abnormal.

"I will tell you," Miro went on, "some of the things you don't understand. First, my nephew has been shot dead with your gun."

"With my gun?"

"My God!" said Miro. "Don't you even understand that? Why do you think my sister was so keen you should carry your gun?

"Secondly, you're carrying valuable jewellery you've just stolen from me. At the moment you're only carrying a sapphire collar, but you can put this in your pocket as well." Miro took a small object out of the pocket of his shorts and shot it across the highly polished floor to Mark's feet. It was a ring, a diamond between two opals. "How are you carrying the collar?"

"In a belt."

"Put the ring beside it."

What would happen, Mark wondered, if he refused? He opened his shirt and fumbled with the belt.

Miro grinned sardonically, his lips pulled back from his big, yellow teeth. He said: "In about ten minutes I'm going to call the cops, Mr. Raeburn, and I don't want you to go expressing honest amazement at the things you've done, so I'll just tell you the whole story.

"Look at it the way the cops will see it. First of all, you're a friendless foreigner. By your own admission you're a private detective. In this country that's a disreputable trade. Private detective are often pretty near to being public criminals. You've just started your own agency, so you're in need of money.

"There's your background. Disreputable and in need of money. Then, by accident, you learn where you can

"I want something for a little demon"

place your hands on valuable jewellery."

"By accident? What accident?" Mark put all the stupidity he could into the question.

"My sister will say she gave you a letter to mail to me—a letter which I can produce for the police. My sister and I have always been on the best of terms, Mr. Raeburn. If there were any need for it, I could produce dozens of witnesses of that.

"Some weeks ago my sister and I willingly agreed to exchange the jewels our mother left to us. As it happened, the arrangement was made in front of independent witnesses. Again they could swear to it if necessary." Miro poured himself another drink.

"Mr. Ablondi—just let me move so that I don't have to look at—at that." Mark jerked his head towards the body.

"You don't like it, eh?"

"Blood makes me sick."

Miro laughed. "It'll seem quite natural if you're kind of upset. Just listen to me. The letter my sister gave you to mail begged me to take care of the jewels. It described—as it happens—where I kept them, in my bedroom. I had been saying, it seems, that anybody could get into this house, and my sister in her letter repeats this and begs me to tell Tony to get a burglar alarm fitted.

"Clearly," Miro continued, "you opened that letter. At least, the evidence is that you probably did. You were given it one day in Sunningdale, and it wasn't mailed until the next day in St. James's—beside your office. I can show the postmark."

"But Walter!" Mark cried. "Walter Guest! He knows why I really came out here." He put panic into his voice.

"No," said Miro. "Strange as it may seem, that did occur to us. When my sister saw Mr. Guest, and asked for a private detective, she told him it was for a possible divorce. She said it concerned a niece who was staying in her house. She made up a little story about her niece keeping compromising letters in a locked trunk. She wanted a trustworthy person to open the trunk, and to shadow her niece. Nothing at all was said about me, or jewels, or the United States."

"Oh my God!" said Mark. "My God! You're murdering me as well. How can you do it?" He jerked his shoulders at the corpse. "I'm going to be sick."

He threw himself back violently, crossing his legs, and, without making any great effort, called back the nausea he had felt earlier. Looking back under the crook of his arm he saw Miro come forward, with his gun still in his hand.

"You stupid lump!" said Miro. "So you would be clever and have me arrested?" He kicked Mark. Mark moaned and retched, and Miro walked in for another kick.

It was then that he made the fatal mistake of walking between the crossed legs of an opponent on the ground. The scissor kick caught him at ankle and knee, and his gun was pointing at the ceiling when it went off. Then it flew out of his hand.

Mark jumped to his feet and kicked the gun backwards with his heel. Miro also scrambled to his feet, with surprising agility for a man in his fifties, and rushed at Mark. But clearly Miro knew nothing about unarmed combat. Mark stepped aside and kicked him hard on the kneecap. Then, as Miro plunged forward, Mark brought his knee up and smacked it under his jaw. Miro rolled on the floor, out to the world.

Mark looked down at Miro's heavy body and rubbed his knee thoughtfully. Now what? There were many things he wanted to know—things which only Miro could tell him. But Miro was deeply unconscious, and might stay that way for two or three hours.

Mark knew he could not stay in the house as long as that. His position was only a little better now than it had been when Miro had been on the point of calling the police.

Of course there was some fatal weakness in the case against him that Miro had outlined. Miro himself had shot Tony. Miro and his sister had taken terrible risks in framing him. Suppose, after all, he *had* told Walter what he was being asked to do? Miro and Mme Malatino had relied upon professional discretion, but they had taken a fearful risk. They must have felt themselves to be in grave danger or desperate need of some kind.

What danger? What need? If he could find that out the whole case against himself would be greatly weakened, because his story would then be credible.

He looked round the room. Searching the floor, he found a trapdoor in the corner and pulled it up. Underneath, a flight of steps led down to a cellar.

He went back to where Miro lay. Mark pulled the unconscious man to the trapdoor and, without any particular gentleness, rolled him down the steps. Then he found the kitchen and took a selection of foodstuffs which he put down in the cellar. It was not his intention that Miro should starve.

Finally he sat down himself and quickly made a good meal. When he had finished he went back to the studio and, with his handkerchief, wiped the window on which he had left his fingerprints. Like those of every other alien, his fingerprints were on record in the United States. He reloaded and pocketed his gun.

Then he took the collar and the ring out of his belt, and thought for a moment.

There was a shelf running round the studio, about eight feet high. On it stood a collection of brilliantly coloured earthenware jugs. He dropped the jewels into one of them, took a last look round and then quickly left the house.

HE had only one thought in his head now: Audie. She alone could help him. She alone could provide some clue that might unravel the mystery.

She had told him that she was going to her house—the old Coastguard House—at May Harbor. It couldn't be far away. He had got to find it. He had got to find Audie. . . .

The old village of May Harbor sits back half a mile from the coast, in a sheltered hollow. It was in 1930, when houses in May Harbor were cheap, that George Russen bought the old Coastguard House. He was rich, on the way to becoming much richer, and he was starting a family.

Twenty-odd years later his daughter Audie met a cousin of Tony Ablondi, one of their distinguished neighbours, and married him. Audie's mother was already dead. Her father died some years later.

The old Coastguard House lay at one extreme end of May Harbor, and the Ablondi house—May Island House—lay at the other extreme.

About all this, Mark Raeburn knew nothing. He guessed, though, that the old Coastguard House would be right down on the coast and, from what he had seen of May Harbor, he reckoned he stood at one end of it and that the proper course was to head back along the coast to the other.

As he walked, he began to sweat. Already the police might be on the job. And, if they were, he was certain that they would hear within half an hour of the suspicious stranger with the foreign accent, white-faced and sweaty with nerves, who had arrived by train and hadn't been seen to leave.

Suddenly, in front of him, about a hundred yards away, and stretching away on both sides in an immense, slow curve, was a belt of sand dunes. Beyond he could hear the heavy

Continued on page 26

MY BROTHER ERIC

See page 21

Eric Maschwitz, the playwright and composer, is Mrs. Ruth Smith's brother

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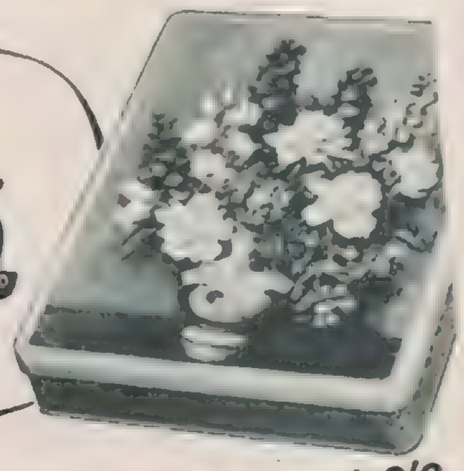

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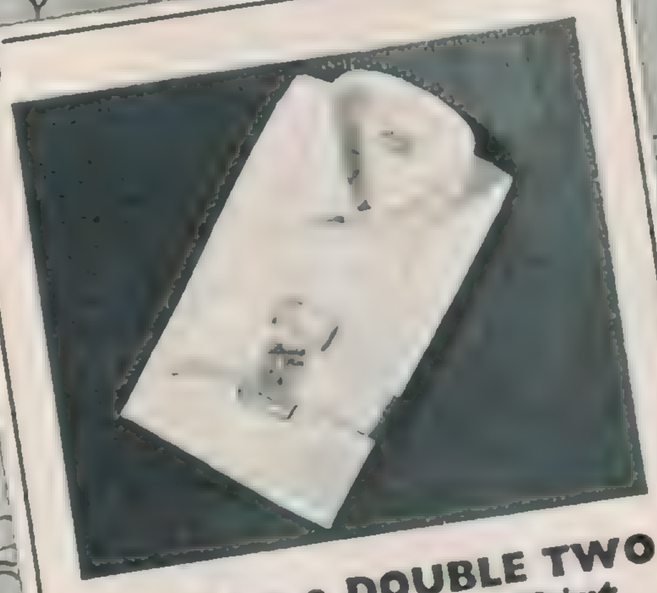

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LAST DAY TO POST COUPON WEDNESDAY JAN. 2

murmur of the surf. He walked towards the dunes, not hurrying too much. Then he saw that about thirty feet away, half concealed in a hollow, two boys were staring at him.

Mark sat down suddenly, like a man tired with walking. The boys moved round a little, still staring. They were probably just surprised to see anybody, and boys, of course, would stare at anything. But he didn't like it.

He looked round, pretending to see them for the first time. "Hi, son," he said. "You know the old Coastguard House?"

The boys looked at one another. "Sure," said one of them. "It's a big house right down there." He pointed to where the yellow band of beach faded out in the shimmering heat.

"Long way?" Mark hoped that by talking as little as possible he might conceal his un-American accent. The last thing he wanted was to arouse any interest, to have somebody asking him where he came from.

The boy nodded.

"Five miles?" Mark asked.

"Maybe. Maybe more."

"I'd best get along," Mark said. He stood up and tried to give a friendly grin, but his face felt stiff. As he walked along the sand dunes he felt sure that the boys were staring after him.

IT was getting on for mid-afternoon now and, although there was a breeze from the sea, it was very hot. Mark took off his jacket and walked with it over his arm. After what he reckoned to be about four miles he began to look out for the old Coastguard House.

And now the question which had been at the back of his mind came to the front, and stayed there: what was he to say to Audie Malatino—if he found her? Of course she might not be at home. And it was hardly likely that, if she were, she would be alone. She might have a house full of guests. She might be giving a cocktail party.

But these were minor problems. Somehow or other he would find a way of speaking to her without letting anyone else know of his presence. And then—what would he say?

"I've just seen your uncle murder your cousin. He used my gun. I was there because I'd taken a sapphire collar from him on board the liner Manhattan."

It sounded insane. He realized once again how boldly Miro and his sister had played their game. How could he, a mere acquaintance, convince Audie that her uncle was a murderer?

In going to find Audie he was hanging on a thread: on a smile, a look; on his impression that she didn't like Mme Malatino; on his own feeling that she was something quite different from the family she had married into.

Then he saw another house ahead. It stood on a shallow headland, which rose a little above the level of the beach and which had, instead of dunes, a ledge of rock running down to the sand. It was large and rambling and it appeared to be old. It was, in fact, the only house he had seen which wasn't entirely modern, and he felt sure that it must be the place he was looking for.

He approached cautiously, slowing down. Like a man taking an evening stroll he walked round it, keeping as far away as possible.

There was no sign of life. Some windows were shuttered, but others were not. There was no car, but on the other hand the garage was large enough for several.

He watched the house for ten minutes or so. He dared not wait any longer. Walking up to the front door, he rang the bell.

Audie opened the door herself, and she was just as he remembered her, although now she was dressed in jeans and a tartan shirt and had a scarf round her head which concealed her hair. Only one babyish blonde curl escaped, striking a frivolous note against her startled, serious face.

"Mr. Raeburn!" she exclaimed. "Well, for heaven's sake!" Her eyes opened wide as she looked at him.

"I'm sorry to startle you," he said. "But I'm here on business for your aunt. It's very important. Are you alone?" He spoke very quietly.

"Yes," she said. "I'm alone. Come in." She looked completely puzzled. "I knew you were working for my aunt, of course, but she said something about it being over Anita's divorce—that's a niece of hers on the other side of the family."

"I expect that's what your aunt told you," Mark said, "but it was only a cover story. I want to tell you what really happened."

He entered the hall. It was large, but only partly furnished, with no carpet or pictures. Such furniture as there was was covered with dust sheets.

Audie had turned away to let him in, but now she faced him again. She had got over her momentary alarm. She was alone in the house: his sudden arrival and the note in his voice might have frightened many women. But he knew that Audie was not afraid.

Finding her had made him feel better than he had done at any time since Tony had been shot. . . .

Mark said: "I thought he meant me to hand over the collar and that maybe I could call his bluff. I thought on the one hand he wouldn't dare to shoot me, yet on the other hand I thought maybe he was crazy enough for anything. But it wasn't that at all."

He took a breath and broke off. It was twenty minutes since he had arrived at the old Coastguard House. He and Audie were sitting in a drawing-room that overlooked the sea.

So far Mark had told his story slowly, filling in the detail. He wanted to give Audie time to get used to him, to get over the shock of his arrival, before he gave her a bigger shock still.

Now he allowed a long silence to develop. Then he said: "You know Tony Ablondi well, of course?"

"Yes, of course. I've known him ever since he came here."

"Do you like him?"

"Oh *yes*." For a moment Audie's face lost its seriousness. "Tony's so nice. He's sweet, and lots of fun, too. He's famous, you know, but it doesn't spoil him. He's in Texas right now."

Slowly, Mark shook his head. "He's not. He was in the house. Miro suddenly called for him, at the top of his voice, as though he were calling for help. He yelled once or twice, and then Tony came in. As soon as he came into the room I heard the gun go off, and Tony fell."

Audie sat up, her face twisted in shock. "*Miro* . . . shot . . . *Tony*?"

"Yes. He fired three times. Tony was dead before he hit the ground. He didn't suffer or anything. He didn't even have time to look astonished."

"But *why*? For God's sake, why?"

"I don't know why. I thought maybe you could help me about that. But you see, don't you, that this was a very elaborate frame-up contrived by Miro and Madame Malatino?"

He explained to her, point by point, the case that had been built up against him. "How wicked!" she said when he had finished. "How *vile*!" Her whole face was lit up with anger.

Mark described how he had overcome Miro and locked him in the cellar. "Then I came to you," he said, "because I thought you might know something that would help."

The anger was fading out of Audie's face. She looked grave again, and puzzled.

"But I don't know anything," she said. "You know—I—I just can't take it in."

"Audie," Mark said, "I'm sorry to press you, but we must think quickly. At any moment Tony's body may be found. It may have been found already. I'm an easy person to trace. The police will be after me.

"I want you to think about Miro and Tony and Madame Malatino. You see, there's one thing we know for sure. This murder was a clever scheme, insanely clever, but it was a desperate thing as well. These two must be in a desperate situation. They *must* be.

"You know them both. You knew Tony. You must think and remember. What's behind it? Where is the answer?" In his restless need for more action, Mark got to his feet, looking down at Audie.

SHE concentrated hard. "I don't know where the answer is," Audie said slowly. "But I don't think it's here. All the Ablondi family are very tied up with one another—a lot of cousins and uncles, and brothers-in-law and nephews, and the women, too, all in business together. Like a Jewish family"—her seriousness seemed to fade for a fleeting instant—"or a Highland clan.

"Even people who marry into a clan act the same way—or they're supposed to. For instance, Madame Malatino married a cousin. That was a new tie between the Ablondis and the Malatinos. Tony asked one of his Malatino cousins out here for the summer and that cousin was Gianni, you see, and I married *him*. And Miro always stays with Tony when he's over on business. Again, that seems natural in the clan. They'd do that whether they were personally on good terms or not."

"I see," said Mark. "But to an American jury it would suggest they were pretty good friends, and that's another point against me—another little point Miro was relying on. *Were* they good friends?"

"Not exactly good friends," Audie replied, "but they always got on all right. I guess it was just a convenient arrangement. I believe Miro had helped Tony in some way when Tony was young—steered clients towards him or something. It couldn't have been much, though, for Tony was pretty well-off himself."

"Tony was rich in his own right?"

"I don't know about rich. He owned some property in Italy—some land and a villa. Miro rents it. That's the clan again, you see."

"Whereabouts in Italy?"

"Near Milan," Audie said. "The clan is centred on Milan really, and Miro has an apartment there, and an office. The villa is just a summer place, like all our houses here."

Suddenly Audie rose to her feet, moved to the window and then turned back towards Mark. "I am absolutely certain," she said, "that the answer lies in Italy."

And what else, Mark asked himself bitterly, had he been hoping for? Of course the answer lay in Italy. Miro was an Italian living in Italy. Even Tony and Mme Malatino had their roots there. What *had* he been hoping for? Even if Audie had suspected something, what evidence could she possibly have produced?

"I do remember just one small thing," she went on, "when Miro was staying in Sunningdale. I went into the garage one day to get my car out. I must have gone in quietly. Miro and my aunt were sitting in her car.

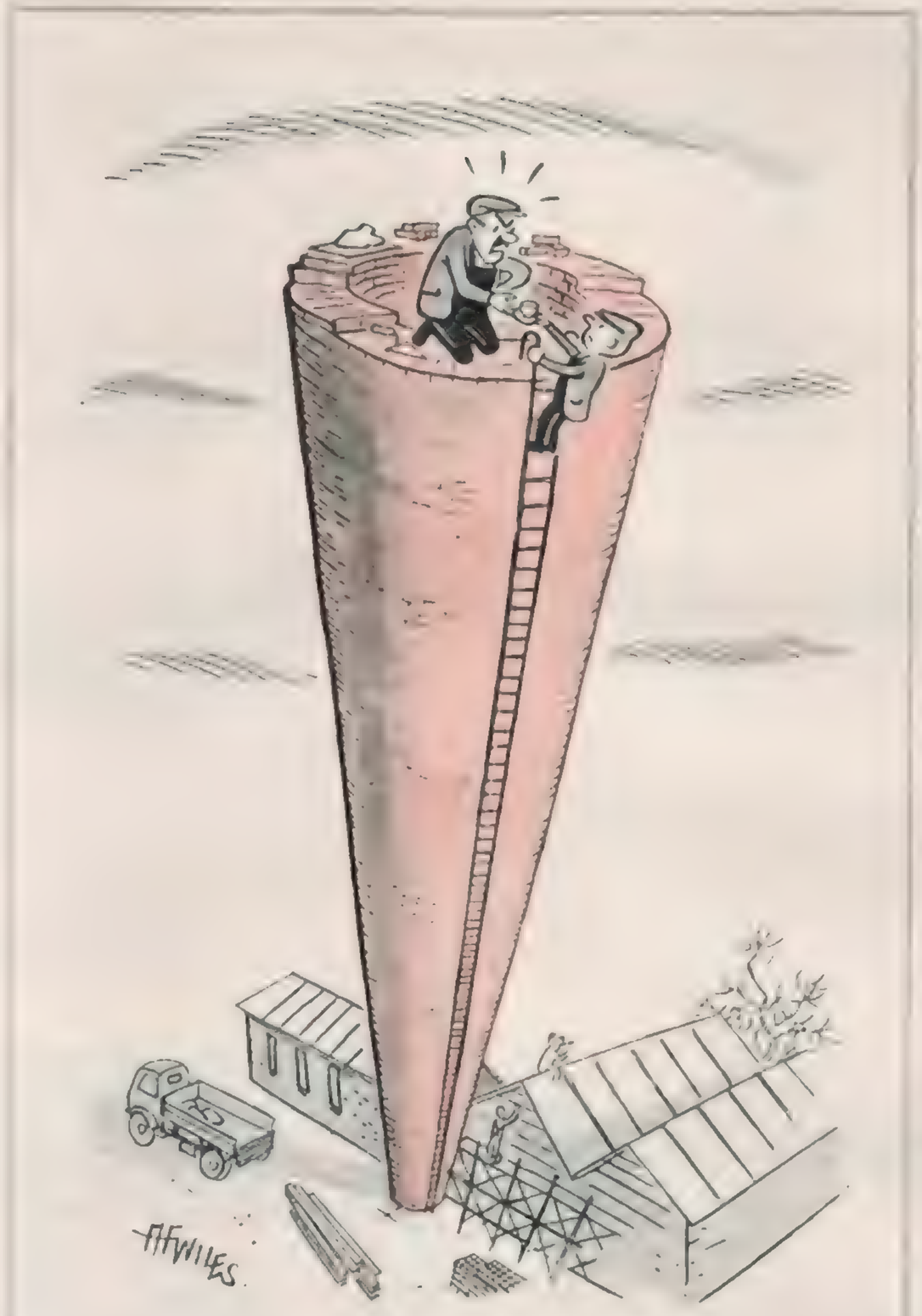
"Miro was just finishing a sentence, and it was in Italian, of course. It was something about Tony and proprietary rights. Somehow I got the impression that Miro was saying something he'd often said before. You know that tone of weary patience?"

"Yes. I know."

Mark's feeling of frustrated bitterness deepened. He realized that he had, after all, hoped that Audie would have some evidence, some tiny shred of evidence; and that was exactly what she had. But it was utterly useless, because it pointed to Italy.

It was at that moment that the door bell rang.

To be continued next week



"As usual, stone cold and slopped in the saucer"

FACES—2

A good face is a letter of recommendation.

Seventeenth-century Proverb

A matter of room numbers

Continued from page 6

I've moved again. I've gone to Number 18—you know, the one with the patched wallpaper. By moving the furniture round a bit, I've hidden the patch. I wonder we didn't think of it before."

Jeremy could think of no answer beyond an unfriendly grunt.

In the days that followed, he mused a good deal about this business of rooms. If she thought it worth while to move nearer the office, why shouldn't he? After all, he had a gamy leg. He'd moved in the first place only because he was angry about her arrival. By doing so, he'd surrendered to her. He'd allowed her to make him uncomfortable, and that was just too damned silly. Defiantly and ostentatiously, he repainted Room 8—the one that looked out on the putting green—and had Pepsicola move his belongings into the new quarters.

Harriet Jacobs, to his secret relief, said not a word.

Harriet's improvements in the hotel were obvious both to visitors like myself and to the directors in Johannesburg.

The place was soon running so satisfactorily that Jeremy found time hanging on his hands and, after one spectacular row in which the district officer who happened to be in the bar had to intervene, he decided to take a fortnight off and go big game hunting —with his camera instead of the gun he had used as a young man.

This safari had two sensational results.

In the first place, Harriet Jacobs changed her room once again from Room 18 to Room 12, which opened off the lounge where there was a telephone. Jeremy had a telephone extension to his own room but had rejected her claim to one, ostensibly for reasons of economy, secretly for reasons of jealousy. There must be no doubt who was boss. But with him down on the Serengeti Plains photographing elephant and lion, she must be available to deal with night telephone calls and it might take weeks before the telephone engineers would fix up the extension he had so pettishly refused her. In his enthusiasm for the proposed safari, he even suggested the move himself.

The second result of this safari was still more important. Jeremy had barely reached the plains when one of his boys came panting into the camp in a state of great excitement. He had seen, a mile away, a caravan of cars and lorries filled with bwanas the like of whom he had never seen before. Dressed up as white hunters, some of them were; but obviously as new to hunting as any infant. And their machinery! Queer things that had to be seen to be believed. No such expedition, he declared, had ever been to Africa before.

Jeremy clambered into the Land-Rover and drove off to make inquiries. There was no difficulty in finding the newcomers, for they were making enough noise to frighten the game for miles around and smoke from their fires curled thickly towards the sky.

As he came in sight of the camp, Jeremy slowed down in disgust. "It's like Blackpool during Wakes Week," he told the uncomprehending boy.

He was slightly consoled by the sight of one man whom he knew—an established white hunter named Joe Evans whose worn and stained clothes looked very conspicuous among all the expensive new outfits. And Evans was delighted to see Jeremy. Obviously he felt unhappy with his companions and not without reason. They belonged, he hastened to explain, to a film company that was to do the biggest-ever film about wild Africa.

"You'd better come and meet them," he said, "but for God's sake don't let on that you've never heard their names before. Express awed surprise. Costs nothing and pleases them no end."

Poor Jeremy Sykes wasn't very good at that sort of thing but it didn't much matter for the film people were genuinely pleased and excited to meet so romantic a figure as this man with the lined face who stumped into their camp in the middle of the Serengeti Plains.

He looked the part so much more than they did themselves. A Scotch and soda was thrust into his hand and a pale, podgy man almost forced a large cigar into his mouth. His sense of indignation began to wane under the warmth of their admiration.

The podgy man turned out to be the film director, Leopardi Grossmann. The little man with the wispy, pathetic beard was a scriptwriter. There was a bewildering crowd of actors, actresses, dressers, make-up experts, cameramen.

The outcome of the meeting was that Grossmann, who found the comfortable camp equipment too uncomfortable for his taste, suddenly decided to make his headquarters at the Tanganyika Highlands Hotel. Too far from big game? He guessed they could take many of the shots within a few miles of the hotel and there would be time to come out to this god-awful plain, with all its night noises, after the two stars, Frankie Watson and Lorna Gray, had arrived from Hollywood.

The decision made, Jeremy turned homewards as fast as he could, while the film cavalcade rushed to and fro, packing their marvellous equipment back into lorries and cars. Grossmann, who never wasted time, arrived at the hotel even before Harriet Jacobs had finished putting flowers in all the bedrooms, and within the hour of his arrival the manager of the little telephone exchange some forty miles down the road—the corrugated laterite track known as the Great North Road—had been driven almost to suicide by demands for telephone connections with Dar-es-Salaam, Cairo, Nairobi, London and believe it or not—and he couldn't believe it—New York and Hollywood.

There was now no question of Harriet moving back to her own room from Room 12 and Jeremy decided that he must move up to Room 10, on the other side of the lounge which had a door connecting it to the office. The film world revolved in an amazing atmosphere of make-believe in which nobody realized the difficulty of procuring such unexpected luxuries as smoked salmon, Bourbon whisky, T-bone steaks and American magazines. Harriet and Jeremy, for the first time in two years, found they had little time to quarrel.

Then the stars arrived. Harriet knew all about Frankie Watson and Lorna Gray, for she studied the few stray magazines that were left in the hotel lounge with a far greater care than she would have admitted even to herself. Jeremy knew nothing of either of them. He would have classed Watson as "phoney" if that word had existed in his vocabulary. Also, Watson blotted his copybook on the second evening by cursing Pepsicola, an old and highly valued servant, in front of all the guests in the lounge.

"What a contrast to the woman!" Jeremy remarked in the office. "She seems quite a decent sort—for a film

Innocence

by JON WYNNE-TYSON

Stilling the tongue in its bitterest mood,
Slowing the angriest rush of the blood,
Seeing and knowing but only the good
Is the love of a child.

Calm, and transcending the doubts of the mind,
Clear where the eyes of the wiser are blind,
As certain of love as a flower of the wind
Is the love of a child.

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star. At least, she *behaves* like a lady."

"All part of the publicity racket," commented Harriet. "She's much older than I'd expected, and all that make-up can't disguise her age. As for Pepsicola, he behaves much too much as though he were a member of the family."

Jeremy let the comment about Pepsicola pass—a thing he would never have done in ordinary circumstances. "Old!" he grunted. "How jealous all you women are!" And he stumped out of the office, only to be back within a quarter of an hour to fetch his big-game photographs which Lorna Gray had expressed a desire to see.

Thereafter an odd friendship was sparked off between Jeremy and Lorna Gray. She proved an interested and sympathetic listener, interested when Jeremy talked with such loving understanding about all sorts of animals she had never seen, and sympathetic when he complained about how difficult working with some women could be.

A crisis came on the morning when most of the company, with Jeremy Sykes now on the pay-roll as co-adviser with Joe Evans, were to leave for the Ngorongoro Crater. Jeremy was giving Harriet some last-minute instructions in the office.

Suddenly he stopped short in the middle of a sentence. "You've got make-up on your face," he said accusingly.

"Well, why not?"

"It's absolutely plastered over. I don't like it in my hotel."

"The company's hotel," she corrected him. "And it is not plastered

FACES—3

Nationalities have different languages in facial expression as well as in lingual expression.

J. J. Rousseau

on. At least I don't cover myself with mudpacks and mascara, and my eyelashes are my own."

"I don't see," said Jeremy furiously, "what Miss Gray has got to do with it. Anyhow, she has to use a certain amount of make-up, even off duty. It's part of her job. It's not part of yours. It doesn't suit people of your age and I don't like it."

"You're the meanest, most selfish old pig I've ever met and I hate you like hell," Harriet retorted, and stalked out of the office.

Jeremy at once regretted what he'd said. But she was so damned unfair about Lorna. Still, he'd been wrong to speak like that. Wrong, rude and unfair—but how that damned woman had a gift for bringing out the worst in him!

Or was it, perhaps, that any woman he had to come into frequent contact with brought out the worst in him? In that case, wasn't he to blame as much as she?

He was gruff with bad-tempered remorse as he supervised Pepsicola packing the guns, brandy flask, camera and other equipment into the Land-Rover. He'd make some sort of apology before they left. After all, Harriet Jacobs did her job well, and it wasn't entirely her fault that she was a woman. If only. . . .

But they left late. Lorna Gray could never be ready on time. She kept remembering things she'd forgotten. The whole hotel was in an uproar in her service and on her behalf.

By the time they were all ready to leave, Jeremy was not in the mood to utter more than a surly: "Sorry I was rude," to Harriet. And he wasn't even sure that she'd heard.

I don't know much about what happened in that camp on the lip of the Ngorongoro Crater, but I heard later that they had had the worst of bad luck.

The crater is an unforgettable sight. Ten miles in diameter, it has every kind of game living at the bottom of it. On its edge stands a large log hut used as a dining-hall. Half a dozen smaller huts with trestle beds are grouped round it and to complete the camp there are a couple of boys to hew wood and draw water. You bring your own food and do your own cooking.

A very comfortable place, really, but damnably cold when it's in the clouds, as it was nearly all the time they were up there. And cloud makes the foulest possible weather for film work. They spent days down on the floor of the crater waiting for the sun, and during those days everything seems to have gone wrong.

I don't know whether you saw the film—*Safari Joe* they called it—but when they came to the climax, with Lorna Gray, trapped under the overturned jeep, being saved by Frankie Watson, she had developed a shocking cold. Then Lorna had a flaming row with her stand-in, which wasted a whole day while a tearful Grossmann tried to coax them back to normal. And for two whole days the mist was so bad that there was nothing to do, and Frankie Watson was reduced to going along the track with Joe Evans, trying to identify wild animals by their droppings.

It wasn't the kind of situation that brought out the best in Jeremy Sykes, and the biggest row of the lot seems to have been between him and Leopardi Grossmann about Lorna and her make-up—a row in which, I confess, my sympathies would have been entirely on Jeremy's side. After all, Lorna was supposed to have gone through the most frightful hardships in her search for Frankie Watson, who'd gone off on a most dangerous safari with a gun she'd tampered with in a moment of jealousy.

But she always turned up with her hair neat and tidy. Her clothes were as picturesquely and as suggestively torn as those of any pantomime Cinderella but her neat and tidy hair had enraged Jeremy almost beyond words.

No, said Grossmann, her public liked her with her hair that way, and it was her public, not some lousy white hunter, who mattered. And what had angered Jeremy most was that Lorna, who had seemed so sensible, had taken Grossman's side. In fact, when Jeremy had ventured to ruffle her hair—very gently and almost affectionately—she'd turned on him like one of the lionesses Watson was supposed to save her from.

It must have been a very bad-tempered company that returned to the Tanganyika Highlands Hotel at the end of three weeks of that sort of thing.

It was all patched up on the last day, with everybody being a little more affectionate and effusive than they needed to be. They had a dance and for most of the afternoon before it Lorna had Harriet in her room with her—much to Jeremy's annoyance, although he didn't like to say so.

But the result was astonishing, according to the district officer who came along as one of the guests. Harriet's hair was cut and done in

WINNER OF COVER CONTEST NO. 9

MR. S. J. CORLETT, of 34 Wenallt Road, Rhiwbina, Cardiff, has won £100 in JOHN BULL'S cover contest No. 9. His title for Petts's painting of a policeman taking the number of a car parked by a woman driver (November 17) is: A NOTED LADY, BY CONSTABLE.

"Are you sure it's a good idea to let Smith handle his own tax?"

some way that was quite new to the Highlands Hotel. Her eyebrows were plucked, though why she had consented to this operation nobody who had known her in the old days could imagine. And Lorna fixed her up in a dark green dress that showed off her figure in quite a startling way. In fact, the D.O., whose father was a Methodist parson, was as shocked as he was excited.

That's nearly the end of the story. The two people most concerned, Jeremy and Harriet, are very uncommunicative about the next day. Owing mainly to Lorna Gray's long and effusive farewells, the whole cavalcade did not leave for Dodoma until late in the afternoon. At the very last moment, Leopardi Grossmann tried, in vain, of course, to offer Jeremy Sykes a contract in Hollywood.

IT was not until sunset that both Harriet and Jeremy found themselves free. She'd been busy in the bedrooms, he in the office. They met in the lounge just as Jeremy was telling Pepsicola to bring him a large whisky.

"Better make it two," he said, and signed Harriet to occupy one of the rather shabby wickerwork chairs. "Thank the Lord they've gone!"

"Yes," she agreed. "It's nice to have the place like home again after all the madness of the last few weeks." She lifted her glass in a rather awkward way. "Here's to peace!"

They talked for a few minutes about such matters as the hotel's profits and the habits of film stars. Then Harriet rose to go to the dining-room so that she would be ready to take over the office when he went to dine.

"The place is so quiet now," suggested Jeremy shyly, "that I don't really think we need worry about the office. Shall we have dinner together? A little celebration!" Then, as she went towards Room 12 and he turned towards Room 10, he added some words she could hardly hear. Probably she wouldn't have heard them had they not been complimentary.

"I like your hair that way," he said.

The only guest in the dining-room that evening was a government vet passing through from some conference in Mbeya. He was a newcomer to Tanganyika and, therefore, unable to appreciate the significance of the gesture when Jeremy Sykes called out: "Pepsicola, hurry up with the champagne."

I hope all that explains my astonishment when I read the announcement of Harriet and Jeremy's marriage in the *East African Standard*. There's nothing to add except perhaps that, when I called at the hotel a few weeks ago, I noticed that "Private" had been painted on the doors of the former office and of Room 10. The new office used to be Room 12.

The frangipani, by the way, are doing fine. THE END

The small woman

Continued from page 9

first attracted Gladys's attention. Although they were a normal part of the Shansi dress, she had never seen them that colour before; she thought at once that the woman must come from a village she had never visited, that she had not even heard about.

Gladys walked towards her, intending to find the answer to these questions.

As she approached she saw that a child leaned against the woman's knee, an appalling, sickly scrap of a child, clad in a dirty bit of loincloth: it had legs like stalks, a swollen belly which told of malnutrition, and the head and body were covered with running sores.

"Woman, you have no right to sit on the side of the road with a child in that condition," she said sternly.

The woman's dark eyes flicked up at her insolently. "Mind your own business," she said.

"It is my business," said Gladys indignantly, remembering her official status as foot-inspector. "You let the baking sun pour on its head much longer, and it will die."

"What has it got to do with you whether it dies or not? If it does, I'll soon get another one."

Gladys glared down at her. She guessed from her manner that the woman was not the child's mother. She remembered vaguely that she had heard about people like her. Child dealers? That was it; people who bought and sold children! In the Shansi mountains they were thought of as devils; mentioned only in whispers.

The woman's next remark confirmed her thoughts. She said sneeringly: "Would you like it? You can have it for two dollars."

Gladys realized at once that, as far as current market prices went, the price was cheap. A pretty girl, suitable as a bride, would cost ninety dollars at least; even a young female child would fetch ten dollars. But who would want this sick and weakly infant?

"I haven't got two dollars," she said at once. "It's sick and likely to die, and it will take two more dollars to bury it; and that makes four dollars."

She walked away, the woman's jeering laughter following her. As Gladys walked towards the *yamen*—the mandarin's headquarters—a surge of indignation began to rise inside her.

By the time she was admitted into the mandarin's presence, she was aching to tell him about the child-dealer. She knew, however, that you could not immediately protest to a mandarin, no matter how serious your complaint. Courtesies came first. She bowed low before the imperious robed figure, obeying the ancient ritual of the

Especially for entertaining, more and more people now choose the finest, friendliest drink of all—*Wine!* Nothing else goes so well with good food and good company, gives such a sparkle to parties. Both men and women enjoy it, and it's *not* expensive—so you can be generous. Wine brings a special glow to all your Christmas festivities.

Don't worry if you're not an expert—your wine merchant will help you choose. Here are a few brief hints. If you'd like to know rather more, get our little booklet "A Short Guide to Wine."

- **SHERRY** is the perfect appetizer, before a meal or with the soup. But it's delicious at any time; and it keeps perfectly after opening, so you can always offer your friends a glass.
- **TABLE WINES** can be quite inexpensive and a bottle easily serves four people. With fish and white meat you'll enjoy *white* wine, served cold. With roasts, grills and game, *red* wine at room temperature. *Champagne goes with everything!*
- **PORT**—vintage, tawny or ruby—is a wonderful drink to round off a good meal. Perfect with cheese or dessert, and traditional for toasts. Fine also at odd moments—like sherry, it keeps after opening.

Ask your wine merchant for "A Short Guide to Wine," or write to: The Friends of Wine, Dept. 46, 1 Vintners' Place, Upper Thames Street, E.C.4. (CITy 5377).

WINE COSTS SO LITTLE—*ADDS SO MUCH!*

The Crowning Touch for a Happy Xmas

Here's Aladdin, the poor boy from Pekin, surrounded by gold and jewels in the fabulous treasure cave! He's supposed to be finding the lamp for the strange old man who's waiting outside—but something else has caught his eye. Looking round he can see another like it, and another, and yet another. "Where's my lamp?" storms the old man, "Bring out my lamp!" "You'll just have to wait," replies Aladdin, "I'm not coming out until I've found *all* the Rowntree's Fruit Gums!"

Have fun! See if you can help Aladdin! How many Rowntree's Fruit Gums can you find hidden in the treasure cave?

There are thirty-two Rowntree's Fruit Gums hidden in the cave. Did you find them all?

small official addressing the high and mighty.

"Mandarin, are you well?" she asked.

"Yes, I am well. You are well?"

"Yes, I am well. Have you eaten your food?"

"Yes, I have eaten my food. Have you eaten your food?"

"Thank you, yes. Mandarin, are your old relations well?"

"Yes, my old ones are very well."

This went on for about a minute, and then, the courtesies over, she handed him the slip of paper containing her report. It was a very brief report, because in the very early days before she had learned to write in Chinese, she had to get someone to write the Chinese characters for her. Her reports, in fact, were masterpieces of simplicity. This one read:

"Gladys Aylward has been to Chotsun. Gladys Aylward has come back from Chotsun."

The name of the district or village might alter with each trip, but her written reports didn't. All the details of her work she gave him verbally.

A smile creased the mandarin's mouth as he took the paper.

"You have things to tell me?" he said.

Gladys answered: "What do you do with dealers in children? A few yards away from this *yamen*, a woman tried to sell me a child for two dollars. What do you do about that?"

Gladys had a feeling her question worried him. He walked to the end of the chamber and back before replying. Then he said: "You do not do anything."

"But, Mandarin——"

"Now, tell me what you have done in the district of Chotsun."

THIS was a command, and Gladys told of the women she had seen, the speeches she had made. It took half an hour. When she had finished, the mandarin nodded his head. He picked up the small hammer and rapped the gong. It was the signal for the doors to be opened; the interview was over. As she turned to go, he stayed her with a gesture of his hand.

"About the child-dealer, the law says that Ai-weh-deh is to put her head in the air and pass on the other side of the road. And you will not repeat my words to anyone! Go!"

The doors were open. Gladys walked towards them. She was deeply disappointed in this man for whom she felt so much respect. She turned in the doorway.

"I have to inform you, Mandarin," she said, "that I did not come to China only to observe your laws. I came for the love of Jesus Christ and I shall act upon the principles of His teaching, no matter what you say."

It was a well-timed exit. Before the surprised mandarin had time to reply she had gone. Months later, when they were on terms of much greater friendliness, he reminded her of that meeting. He told her that his friendship and his respect for her had stemmed from that action. It was the first time in his term of office that any person, man or woman, had dared to question his authority as mandarin. It was certainly the first time in his life that any woman had spoken to him in such a fashion.

Gladys walked swiftly down the main street.

The woman was still there. When she saw Gladys she called out: "Lady with the heart of pity, here you are again. I will sell you the child for a shilling."

Gladys stopped and stared at her. "I haven't got a shilling."

"Then how much would you give for it?"

"I haven't any money, and what would I do with the child?"

"But you do want it, don't you?"

Gladys started to dispute the remark, then suddenly stopped. She did want the child.

"How much would you give?" said the woman in a wheedling tone.

Gladys reached inside her jacket pocket. She had a few *cash*, equal to about ninepence. She took the money out. "I'll give you this, but not a penny more."

The woman cupped her hand to take the money. "She is yours." She stood up and hurried off down the street and Gladys looked down at the child. Its age was indeterminate; roughly between four and six years old.

"Come with me," she said. The child made no move. It seemed to comprehend little. Gladys took it by the scruff of the neck and more or less dragged it along the main street, through the gate and back to the inn. Inside the main room, it ran to the darkest corner and crouched there, terrified. Gladys fetched in the cook, Chang, to see what she had brought home.

"Give it some food," said Gladys. "Poor little mite looks nearly dead already."

Chang fetched a bowl of millet and placed it on the floor near the child, who eyed it hungrily, then rushed out, grabbed the bowl and retreated to its corner to eat ravenously.

For three weeks the infant reacted exactly like a wild animal, allowing no one to touch it; it bit and scratched and screamed if any attempt was made to wash or dress or interfere with it in the slightest. It was a girl child, a wild, dark-eyed outcast, hating everyone.

After three weeks of effort, Gladys knew that she was defeated. She knew that she would have to hand over the child to someone better equipped than she to see what they could do. She came down the street towards the inn one late afternoon with this thought in mind, when she saw a young woman sitting in a doorway, weeping over a small dead child which lay in her lap.

Gladys stopped and looked at her. Impulsively, she said: "I have a child which you can have. There's no use in you crying over a dead body. Give me your dead baby and I'll go and bury it. The other child is at the Inn of Eight Happinesses."

The woman did not protest as Gladys took the dead baby out of her lap.

When Gladys returned to the inn after burying the child, she found the woman waiting for her in the courtyard. Chang, beaming broadly, was standing behind her. The woman held "Ninepence"—for that is what Gladys had nicknamed the girl—by the hand. The child was transformed. She had a clean face and was wearing clean clothes.

Gladys stared in astonishment. The woman smiled back at her. She led the little girl forward and slipped the child's hand into Gladys's.

"There is your child," she said. "She will love you when she understands what you have done for her."

Gladys looked down at the small urchin by her side. Ninepence had come to stay.

As the months passed, she grew into a pretty little girl. And it was through her that the family increased. One afternoon she came scurrying into the courtyard, her black eyes popping in excitement.

"Is the food ready?" she called up to Gladys, standing on the balcony.

"Nearly ready."

Ninepence looked up very seriously. "If I was willing to eat a little less of the meal, would you be willing to eat a little less also?"

Gladys had no idea what she was getting at. "Yes, of course."

"Then if we put the two 'lesses' in a basin, we'd have enough food for one more person, wouldn't we?"

"Ninepence," said Gladys severely, "what are you up to now?"

"Do you know," said Ninepence, "that there's a little boy outside the door who hasn't even got a little 'less' in his basin?"

Gladys looked down at the small child in the middle of the large courtyard, a small, blue-uniformed figure with a very serious face.

"Ninepence," she said, "if you're willing to go without, I am, too. We'll give it to this boy. Fetch him in."

Ninepence shouted out, and a ragged little urchin about eight years old appeared from under the balcony. He was in dirty rags, a pale replica of Ninepence when she first arrived. Ninepence had discovered him begging on the streets.

He ate his meal with relish and stayed with them for the next ten years. His nickname thereafter was always "Less."

He was old enough to tell Gladys his story. Bandits had raided his village in Horbay. They had killed the men and taken the women off with them.

Less's mother had been pregnant. Her labour pains started on the forced march and the bandits left her behind in a ditch. He saw her die, and, after tugging in vain at her clothes, left her, to return to their village. It was in ashes. Only corpses lay in the ruins.

He wandered away into the mountains, begged food, joined up with the muleteers on their journeys across the trails, and ended up for good at the Inn of Eight Happinesses, the second child taken to the heart of Ai-weh-deh, the virtuous one.

The third child arrived in the spring of the next year. They had gone to wash their clothes in the first warm spell of bright weather, for in the spring the whole town washed its clothes on the rocks of the river bank a few hundred yards from the East Gate. Gladys was dutifully pounding the wet quilted garments with a piece of wood, hopeful at least that the lice would not dodge all her blows, when she heard Ninepence and Less calling behind her on the bank.

She turned to look; they had a small child of about three walking between them, holding their hands.

"What d'you want with him?" shouted Gladys. "Take him back to where he belongs, this very minute."

"But he doesn't belong to anybody," called Ninepence. "We've looked everywhere. There's no one else about."

"Wait until I've finished this washing. I'll find his parents all right."

SHE did not find his parents. No one turned up to claim the child, and when they had done all they could they took him home with them and let him sleep at the inn. Afterwards, even though they posted notices on the city gates and the mandarin sent the town crier around, no one wanted him.

So Gladys was now responsible for three children. "Bao-Bao"—Precious Bundle—had joined the family.

In the years which followed, Gladys was to become official parent of two more. When the Yellow River flooded and refugees came up into the mountains, they brought with them a small boy called Francis whom no one owned and no one wanted. And Lan-Hsiang was a small girl of eight, "left over" from a law case in the mandarin's court.

The prison governor solved the problem of their schooling. He had three children of his own.

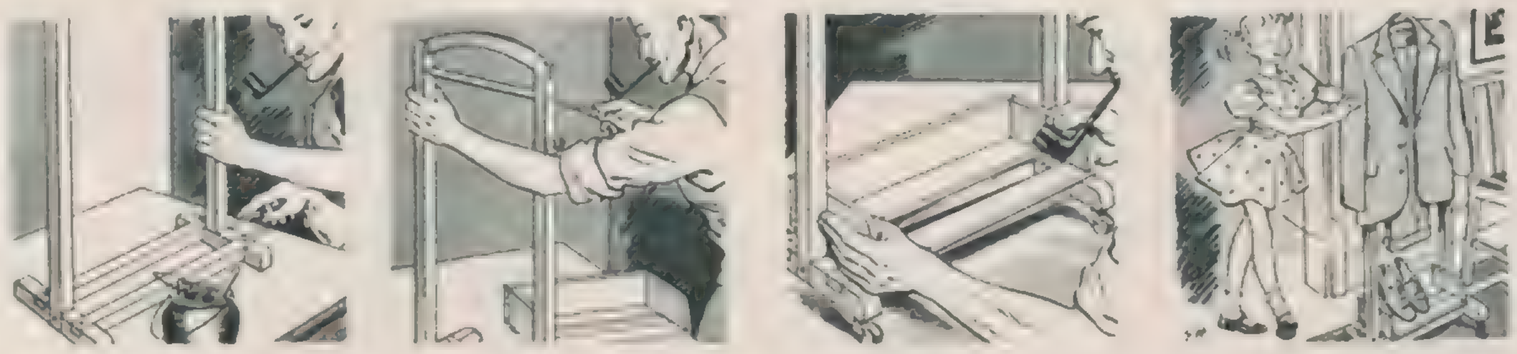
"We must open a school here!" said the governor. "We can get a teacher from Luan—if all the parents will make a small donation towards his salary."

So the school was started, and it was five years from the time it opened that Gladys discovered the story of Ninepence's past. She had grown up into a very pretty little girl, and Less watched over her like a father. It was he who reported to Gladys that for two or three days in a row a man had waited outside the school for Ninepence and tried to talk to her, tried to take her arm on one occasion.

It worried Gladys. She told him she would meet them out of school next day, and, if the man showed up, Less could point him out to her. Sure enough, there he was; and although he did not try to molest the child with Gladys present, he looked at them most menacingly. Gladys didn't know what to do; so, as always in such cases, she went to see the mandarin.

"It is no use apprehending him unless we catch him in the act," said the mandarin thoughtfully. "But I will have a soldier standing by outside the school every day and if this man

Make yourself at home



BY hanging my clothes overnight on a home-made stand instead of putting them in an airless wardrobe, I find that creases soon disappear. I made the stand mainly from 1 in. by 1 in. wood, using this for the side supports and "feet." For the shoe tray I used stout plywood. I slotted the side supports to take an ordinary clothes hanger (with hook removed), and used ½-in. dowel for the trouser rail. Finally, I stained and polished the stand, and screwed clothes hooks to the sides. Castors on the feet enable the stand to be moved with ease.—*W. Lucas, Teddington, Middlesex.*

FACES—4

It is the common wonder of man, how among so many millions of faces, there should be none alike.

Sir Thomas Browne

Greetings
WILLS'S CAPSTAN CIGARETTES
50 WILLS'S CAPSTAN CIGARETTES 50
50 for 9/7
100 for 19/2
give
CAPSTAN
IN FIFTIES AND HUNDREDS
CAPSTAN cigarettes are blended better

lays a hand on the girl again, she must scream and we will arrest him."

The man fell into the trap the very next day. He caught Ninepence by the arm as she came out through the school door and tried to drag her off with him. Less, prowling in the rear, flew at him like an enraged dog and buried his teeth in his arm. The noise was tremendous. When the soldier ran up a few seconds later he had considerable difficulty in inducing Less to release his grip. The man was removed to prison. The mandarin opened the inquiry next day.

The man who was trying to kidnap Ninepence was only an agent for a wicked uncle. So simple were his methods that he could only think of dragging the girl off after school.

Apparently Ninepence's mother had been very happy with her husband and baby daughter. But her husband had died and the mother-in-law, not wanting a female child, had married off mother and daughter into another family. There Ninepence's mother also had died, leaving her as an unwanted female child. She had been given away, and passed through many hands before the child-dealer had met Gladys in the main street of Yangcheng.

The fact that the "foreign devil" was looking after Ninepence quickly filtered back to the grandmother at their mountain farm in a village many miles from Yangcheng. The family made no move to take her back; of what use was a female child to anyone? Chinese philosophy regarding female children followed an ancient tradition. The birth of a girl was looked upon as a disaster.

But then the grandmother died, leaving a farm and money, and with only two people in line of inheritance—the wicked uncle and Ninepence. What would have happened to Ninepence had she been kidnapped, it is unpleasant even to guess. But now, his design revealed, the uncle was about to contest Gladys's claim to the child in the mandarin's court.

The mandarin told Gladys the story after hearing the preliminary evidence; she would have to appear in court to defend her claim to Ninepence.

SHE protested: "But what can I do? I know nothing about Chinese court procedure."

The mandarin looked very bland and impressive. "Before you speak, you will look at me," he said, urbanely. "You will say 'Yes' or 'No.' If I shake my head slightly you will say 'No.' If I nod my head slightly you will say 'Yes.' You understand?"

"Yes, I understand, but I can't lose Ninepence now. She belongs to me. I love her. I've looked after her all these years."

"She will not be taken from you," said the mandarin, quietly.

The case lasted a fortnight and it was several days after that before the mandarin announced his decision.

Ai-weh-deh was appointed official guardian of Ninepence. Her grandmother had left land and money. This would be divided one half to Ai-weh-deh as legal guardian, one half to the wicked uncle; Ai-weh-deh could have which half she desired—the land or the money. That was the decision, and the wicked uncle seemed satisfied by it.

Land was useless to Gladys but the money, which came to almost two hundred dollars, represented a small fortune. It was all saved for Ninepence, some of it spent on her education and the rest reserved for her dowry when she married. . . .

The friendship between the Mandarin of Yangcheng and the tiny ex-parlourmaid from Belgrave Square was remarkable. He was enigmatic. He regarded her urbanely, his fine, powerful face, with its high cheekbones, thin dark almond eyes, always impassive. A glossy pigtail dropped from under his cap; the gowns he wore were embroidered in wide scrolls of many colours, inevitably beautiful: scarlet, blue, green, gold.

To Gladys he always looked as if, by some miracle of time, he had just stepped down from an antique Chinese scroll. His was a feudal society. From his *yamen*, civic authority was administered in much the same manner as it had been dispensed in the time of Confucius.

In one of the inner courts was the place of the women. They were not wives, or even concubines, but slave girls. They were watched over by the older women, most of whom had themselves been *yamen* girls, and whose daughters would grow up and continue in the same service.

They were gay and enchanting girls, singing songs, playing instruments and learning dances; not secluded like harem women, but able to trip through the bazaars, fingering the soft bales of silk, and buying the combs and cheap jewelled ornaments they adored.

Gladys had many friends among them, and often, when she was visiting the mandarin, she would walk through to the women's court to chat and drink tea with them.

There is little doubt that at first, to the Mandarin of Yangcheng, Gladys Aylward was as alien a species as a creature from the moon. She was female, which meant that in the eyes of a man she was socially and intellectually less than dust.

Nevertheless, as news of her exploits reached him, and as, over the months, she continually bombarded him with applications, supplications, admonitions and near-threats, she loomed as astonishingly as a new planet thrust into his orbit. Indeed, as their contacts and acquaintanceship increased, the Mandarin of Yangcheng found to his growing astonishment that not only was she becoming an adviser of sorts, but also a friend.

Gladys blew into his *yamen* with the winds of the world around her ears. To him, she was worldly and foreign. She never forgot his first gentle admonition after she had delivered herself of a particularly impassioned piece of Christian propaganda.

"Ai-weh-deh," he said softly, "you send your missionaries into our land which is older by far in civilization than yours. You see us as a nation of heathens and barbarians, do you not?"

"Not by any means," she said.

The mandarin placed his slender hands in the wide silken sleeves of his robe.

"We have produced great art and great philosophy. The mandarin speech of China is more beautiful and descriptive than any other in the world. Our poets were singing when Britain was but a rocky outpost on the edge of the known world and America was inhabited solely by red-skinned aborigines. Yet you come to teach us a new faith? I find it very strange."

She did not miss the gentle mockery in his voice. With a smile and a polite gesture meant to absolve her from any feeling of guilt at belonging to a society as rude and barbaric as that of the West, he told her of his own education. She learned something of the endless toil which had confronted him before he became Mandarin of Yangcheng.

The basis of all his learning was Confucius. "What Confucius teaches is true: what is contrary to his teaching is false: what he does not teach is unnecessary."

"It seems to me," said Gladys, "that the only concern with your Confucius was how to pattern your life on earth. We in the West believe in life after death. We believe in a Godlike spirit in man which is always present. Are your prophets willing to die for their beliefs? You give most of your life to learning a lot of old books."

"I understand that much of your own religion is based upon an old book," said the mandarin politely, "but it is true that a lifetime can be expended in scholarship. Some do not become finished scholars until they are past three score years and ten."

In all her conversations with the mandarin, Gladys never left his presence with a feeling of inferiority or inadequacy.

In China three religions have met, and become embedded in the daily ritual of life: Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. Gladys Aylward brought a new religion; she travelled the wild mountains in that wild region, bringing a simple faith to uncomplicated people, a faith which answered their needs, and which many embraced devoutly.

To Gladys Aylward, those early years in Yangcheng were peaceful and unhurried. There was time to think, time to sleep, time to pray. The big events stood out in her mind; she did not forget them.

There was the time when the Yellow River flooded, drowning hundreds of people, making thousands homeless, and the refugees trooped back into the mountains, passing in long streams through Yangcheng and on to Tsehchow, Chin Shui and the other cities of the province. There was the time when the Yellow River, bordering the western boundary of Shansi, froze over and Communist troops from Yenan and the province of Shensi walked across the ice.

It was a "three coat" winter that year, the coldest in living memory. You always judged a winter by the number of quilted coats you had to wear, and a "three coat" winter was cold enough to freeze the tea in the pot.

There was heavy fighting around the capital, Taiyuen, far to the north, and the Communist troops infiltrated through the passes as far south as Yangcheng. The posse of resident soldiers under the mandarin's control elected, at that moment, to chase bandits far from the city; they returned, a little sheepish, only when the Communists' three-day occupation was over.

The Communists' advance was little more than a reconnaissance in force; they did no damage in the city, although they inflicted much elsewhere; they were not seen again until the Japanese arrived.

In 1936 Gladys decided that she would become a Chinese citizen. She wanted nothing to cut her off from the people, and it was better to be a "Chinese foreigner" than simply a "foreign devil." With the help of the mandarin she sent off her papers, completed all the formalities and became a naturalized Chinese. It made no difference to her work, or to her relationship with the townsfolk of Yangcheng, but it made her feel as if she belonged to this background.

There was one sadness. Her old friend Mrs. Smith from the Tsehchow mission died. It was her death that brought new missionaries, the Davises, to Tsehchow, one year later, and Gladys made the journey from Yangcheng to welcome them.

She enjoyed immensely these occasional visits to Tsehchow. It lay on the plain, and, although a walled city also, it was much larger than Yangcheng.

Jean Davis, from Perthshire, never forgot her first sight of Gladys. . . . "A wee thin thing with great, dark, staring eyes," she said, "who rattled away in the Shansi dialect as if she'd been born in the district."

The arrival of the Davis family, husband, wife and small son, to live at the mission was a piece of great good fortune for Gladys. They became staunch friends, united in their interests and their work. David and Jean, when they settled down, also dressed and "lived" Chinese.

DAVID DAVIS was a lean, hard Welshman of thirty-three. He had lived in China many years before, serving in the International Customs, on the Yellow River. A considerable amount of gun-running went on through David Davis's Customs post; the Communist troops who held the territories farther up river were willing to pay large sums for arms and ammunition.

On one occasion he discovered a considerable store of rifles and machine guns concealed in a ship bound upriver. He confiscated the cargo and handed it over to the international authorities. From that time onwards he was an unpopular man in Communist eyes.

They captured him with superb effrontery during the visit of a British gunboat. The commander of the ship was dining with him in his bungalow one evening when the Communist troops came quickly down from the mountains on both sides of the river and set up enfilading artillery and machine gun points on each bank. They ordered the naval commander back to his ship, now immobilized under the muzzles of their guns.

David Davis they took to a house higher up the hill and in undramatic, oriental fashion, informed him that he would be executed next morning.

But a British merchant ship, with sand-bagged decks and guns rigged everywhere, summoned the night before by the gunboat's radio, came steaming slowly upriver against the current. During the ensuing artillery battle David Davis made a quick exit through the back door.

His return to China as a missionary started off in the same dangerously theatrical way. He loaded his baggage on to a mule train. In a lonely stretch of the mountain country, a dozen bandits popped up from behind rocks. With the loot fast on their horses, an argument broke out among them about what they should do with him.

Some of the bandits saw in his capture an ideal opportunity of demanding a ransom; others insisted that it was better to destroy the evidence—shoot him and drop his body down a ravine. Eventually, after some squabbling, a man who appeared to be the leader turned to him and yelled "Go!"

David gratefully scrambled away as fast as he could. . . .

The years passed. Sometimes Gladys did not see the Davises for months at a time, for it was a long journey from

TWO ENCHANTING SHORT STORIES IN NEXT WEEK'S JOHN BULL

Grandfather and the Golden West

by BARRY PEROWNE

A Bachelor's Story

by FRANK O'CONNOR

ON SALE MONDAY DECEMBER 24

FACES—5

There is in every human countenance either a history or a prophecy.

S. T. Coleridge

Yangcheng, and her work took her out mainly to the lonelier regions. On one occasion her mother received a letter from a Chinese friend Gladys knew. It ran:

> When your precious daughter came to China my wife first saw her, and then I talked with her, and found that she is a missionary we need in China. She won't mind the bitternesses, difficulties and poverties, but preach the Gospel all the places in the south of Shansi. Most foreigners come to China not purely for preaching the Gospel, and most of them are very comfortable, and therefore very few people in China believe Jesus Christ. Because the people see that it is not same what saying in the Bible when they have it compared.

Gladys lived her frugal, happy life according to the "same what saying in the Bible." She did not know, and no one in Yangcheng ever dreamed, that war would engulf them soon.

The muleteers who carried news and gossip were not experts in political matters. It was only when the caravans passing southwards began to mention that the people in Luan were worried about a Japanese attack that the people of Yangcheng discovered that the Japanese had even invaded northern Shansi.

Even when the news of battles fought far to the north reached them, no one could bring themselves to believe that they would be affected. And so it was on that spring morning of 1938, when the little silver planes came buzzing in over the mountains, everyone ran out of their houses to watch them, for many had never seen an aeroplane before, and these looked so pretty, swooping down out of the sun.

Gladys did not run out of the inn because, at the time, with the cook and four converts, she was kneeling in prayer in an upstairs room. She did not hear the aeroplanes until the last minute, and then the whole world turned into a roaring, jumbled, falling, confused chaos which ended in blackness.

The people in the streets of Yangcheng were still waving and shouting as the pointed metal cylinders fell from the bellies of the aircraft and plummeted down into the town, and their shouts turned to screams of pain and horror as chunks of flying masonry and hissing shrapnel ricocheted among them.

The aircraft droned up and down, very low, swooping out over the valley and then back in again. It was almost impossible to miss. One bomb, however, did miss. It screamed over the buttress of the city walls and struck one corner of the roof of the Inn of Eight Happinesses.

Nine people in the roadway outside were killed at once. In the upstairs room where Gladys, Chang and the others were praying, the floor canted suddenly sideways and they slid and fell downwards in a welter of timber, tiles, dust and plaster, to be buried among this débris in the room below.

GLADYS did not remember losing consciousness; she only remembered hearing faint voices, and then realized that she was lying face downwards with a great weight pressing on her back. She felt no pain, but her breathing was difficult.

She could hear voices nearby saying: "Praise the Lord, praise the Lord!" and her quick thought was: "This is no time to be praising the Lord. Why don't they do something to get me out?"

It seemed hours before Gladys felt the débris being hauled away. At last they got to her. A heavy beam pinned her down; it was a miracle she had not been killed. She felt bruised and sick, but she dusted down her clothes and helped to pull out the cook and the others.

One man was hopping from foot to foot. "In the town it is dreadful," he was crying. "Everywhere is blocked; all are killed; it is dreadful, dreadful!"

"We must go and see what we can do then," said Gladys grimly. "Now stop that caterwauling and go and lend a hand."

In her bedroom she kept her medicine chest. It contained one large bottle of Lysol (broken), one bottle of permanganate of potash crystals, a tin of boracic powder, and plenty of cotton wool. She rapidly tore her two sheets into bandage-size strips and set off for the East Gate.

The walls and gate were untouched, but the centre of the town appeared completely pulverized. Dead and dying, wounded and bomb-shocked lay everywhere. The main street was littered with masonry; bodies were half buried beneath it; people still trapped were screaming for help.

To the chattering group of onlookers at the gate, Gladys became suddenly authoritative. "I need all of you," she snapped angrily. The surprised townsmen stared at her, then obediently followed her instructions. "Now get to work. You must all help. You two men clear that rubble over there; someone is buried. You three, go and get buckets of water—hot water. You, one, two, three, four, five—you'll clear the main street so that there's a clear passage. All the dead you'll carry outside the gates. Understand? Now, let's start working at once."

Into the confusion of rubble and masonry and human pain, Ai-weh-deh contrived to insert some modicum of common sense and first aid.

In the distance of ten yards she dressed the wounds of twelve people. A pail of hot water had appeared and she emptied a few crystals from her precious bottle of permanganate into it. This she dabbed on as a rough antiseptic.

In the late afternoon, she realized that she was still only three-quarters of the way up the main street. On the steps of the *yamen* an old man was sitting, his head on his hands. He was covered with dust but otherwise appeared unhurt. As Gladys clambered over the rubble, he raised his head and looked at her with dull eyes.

"And so God is still alive," he croaked. "You're still here."

"I'm not God and they can't kill him," snapped Gladys. "What are you doing, old man, sitting down when there is work to be done."

"I have been working," he said wearily. "They are all still working over there."

Gladys looked in the direction he pointed. At the corner among the broken masonry she saw her old friend, the prison governor. She went to him.

He was dazed and dirty. "Ai-weh-deh!" he said wearily. "I knew that if you were not dead you would be somewhere in the middle of it."

"You've got people trying to help?" asked Gladys.

"All the prisoners," said the governor. "They are doing very well."

Even as he spoke Feng, the Buddhist priest, appeared round the corner carrying a wounded man on his back.

"We're putting the wounded into the *yamen*," explained the governor, dispiritedly. "But there are so many of them. How much longer can we go on like this?"

"Until the job's finished," declared Gladys impatiently. "But we must put some organization into our relief work. We must get the wounded to shelter, the dead buried, and the city cleaned up. Where is the mandarin?"

"He's in the *yamen*, helping there."

"Let's go and talk to him."

THEY found the mandarin, still in scarlet gown, talking to a group of worried officials. At sight of Gladys he dismissed the others, and sat down to talk to her. He agreed with all she said. Half an hour later, the "relief committee" was functioning. It consisted of the mandarin, the prison governor, Gladys and Lu Tchen, a shrewd little merchant. Caked with dust and sweat and blood, they sat round a table to formulate plans for the relief of their city. They had no experience.

"We must use the muleteers," said Gladys. "We must stop them at the gates of the city, tell them to stable their beasts where they can outside the city, then they must work with us to clear the rubble. There are still people alive under the ruins. We must get them out and clear the main road."

"There are hundreds of homeless, and many wounded," said the governor despondently.

"The temple of Lang Quai and the temple of the Buddhists in the city centre are unharmed," said the mandarin. "In one the homeless can live, in the other we can put the wounded."

"We must pool the food supplies, start a communal kitchen and get the cooks to prepare food," said Gladys.

"The merchants will give food and cloth to the hungry and homeless," added Lu Tchen.

"Women must be enlisted to nurse the wounded," said Gladys, "although I am afraid many will die. The town crier must go round and make these announcements. He should also tell people who have relatives in the country to go out and stay with them."

"I will see that the muleteers and my prisoners clear the main street from the east to the west gate," said the governor.

The mandarin nodded agreement but still appeared worried.

"I have other disturbing news," he said. "Reports have reached me that the Japanese have captured Luan and are advancing on Tsehchow. From Tsehchow they will almost certainly march towards Yangcheng. I understand that they are not merciful people."

"Well, we've several days before they arrive," said Gladys. "We ought not to waste any more time."

NEXT WEEK: Gladys falls in love—and becomes a spy

OPEN TO VIEW

by JAMES LEES-MILNE

Drawn by ROWLAND HILDER

On Christmas Day a genius was born . . . so tiny, he could have fitted into a quart mug

BETWEEN one and two o'clock of Christmas morning, 1642, Mrs. Newton, a widow whose husband had recently died, gave birth to a son in the small manor house of Woolsthorpe, near Colsterworth.

The baby was sickly, and so diminutive that, as Mrs. Newton explained to her son years later, he could have been put into a quart mug. Thus was born Isaac Newton, one of the greatest geniuses of all time.

Woolsthorpe Manor, a plain, stone, L-shaped house of James I's reign, now owned by the National Trust, has hardly changed since 1642. The birth room has a marble tablet over the fireplace with the epitaph by Pope:

> *Nature and Nature's laws lay*
> *hid in night;*
> *God said, "Let Newton be,"*
> *and all was Light.*

Young Isaac was heir to his father's small landed property at Woolsthorpe. When his mother, married again, Isaac, aged three, stayed at Woolsthorpe in the care of his grandmother.

While a schoolboy, he made sundials—one still exists in Colsterworth parish church—and experimental diagrams, some of which may be seen scratched on the plaster walls inside the house.

In 1661 he was admitted to Trinity College, Cambridge, where he was to spend the greater part of his eighty-four years. In 1665 the great plague broke out, the university closed, and for a year and a half Newton took refuge at Woolsthorpe, where he began in earnest upon his great experiments and discoveries. Woolsthorpe became the cradle of the binomial theorem, the differential calculus and Newton's work on colour phenomena from the prism.

One autumn afternoon Newton watched the fall of the famous apple from a tree in the manor garden. This led to the discovery of the law of gravity. The tree was blown down in 1820, its fall hastened by souvenir hunters hacking bits off its roots. Its descendant has survived.

So too have the strange partitions and shelves in the study. A friend of Newton wrote of them: "I observed the shelves were of his own making, being pieces of deal boxes."

How to get there: Woolsthorpe Manor is seven miles from Grantham, Lincolnshire. *Open:* Mondays, Wednesdays, Saturdays, 11 till 1, 2.30 till 6.

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LIEUT. G. PARKER (39 Gill Park, Efford, Plymouth), with thirty-one years' service in the Royal Navy, has a hobby he enjoys every week. It is *Bullets*—in which he recently scored a First Prize success and so sails into 1957 with a big cheque behind him.

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At War	Shabby
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Winter's Sword	That Misery
Shock For The Kremlin	Stubborn Old Sticker
After The Party	Alfie's A Dunce, But
A Bottle Of Medicine	Gave Me A Kick
Bit Of A Gamble	If Adam Saw Us Today

Incomplete "Examples"—see instructions

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(Each winner from £25 to £5 receives also a Christmas Turkey.)

(Above result is reprinted for sake of readers who missed last week's JOHN BULL. *Result of "Bullets" No. 2,066 is due next week.)*

RULES 1. First Prize for best *Bullet* received. Others in order of merit, the test is of cleverness, aptness and originality.

2. Editor undertakes that all *Bullets* received shall be accorded careful consideration by competent adjudicators.

3. As entry-fee enclose P.O. as indicated on coupon. Fee submitted will be taken to cover *Bullets* in coupon order—any sent in excess will be disqualified. Plain-paper entries are allowed. Make P.O. payable to JOHN BULL, cross /& Co./, write name and address on back. Coupons must not be mutilated.

4. Entries accepted by post only and on condition that result of this Contest (in JOHN BULL dated January 26), also Editor's decision in any matter of dispute, are accepted as final and legally binding. Odhams' employees (and families) ineligible.

(See "Daily Herald" on Saturday, January 12, for early news of No. 2,070 result.)

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